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## Westview: Vol. 7, Iss. 2 (Winter 1987)

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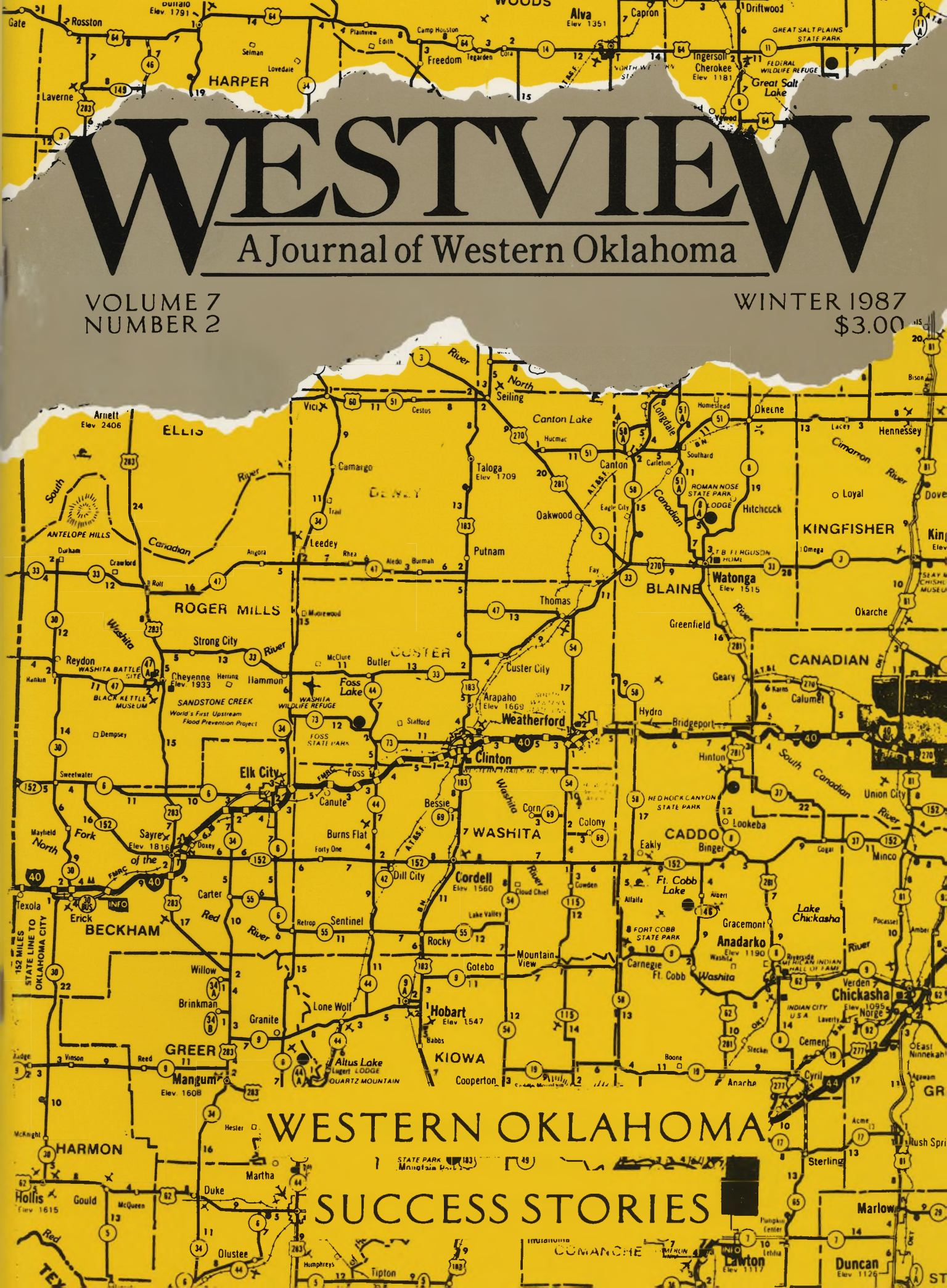
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# WESTVIEW

## A Journal of Western Oklahoma

VOLUME 7  
NUMBER 2

WINTER 1987  
\$3.00

WESTERN OKLAHOMA  
SUCCESS STORIES



# Foreword

Who is there who doesn't like a success story? We hope that our readers enjoy getting acquainted with some successful people in Western Oklahoma. Our contributors were able to find quite a few out there, so this issue wasn't very difficult to fill. In fact, we may have accepted too many things as we did for the Fall, 1987 issue. We never know for sure until we hear from the Art Director.

He has the duty of keeping us to the right size; then the editor has the job of cutting out submissions if the journal is too thick. Those decisions sometimes turn out not to be very popular since most people whose manuscripts we accept keep tabs on the issue dates we have promised them.

We have other frustrations, too. Already we have a feeling that not many people are going to want to contribute to our issue called "Western Oklahoma Politicians" and our issue on "Western Oklahoma Cemeteries." Therefore, any writer who is looking for an almost sure thing should query us about those issues. Nothing succeeds like success, and the best way to be a successful writer for WESTVIEW is to give the members of the Editorial Board the types of articles they want.

HELPFULLY,

*Leroy Thomas*

Leroy Thomas  
Editor.

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NUMBER 2

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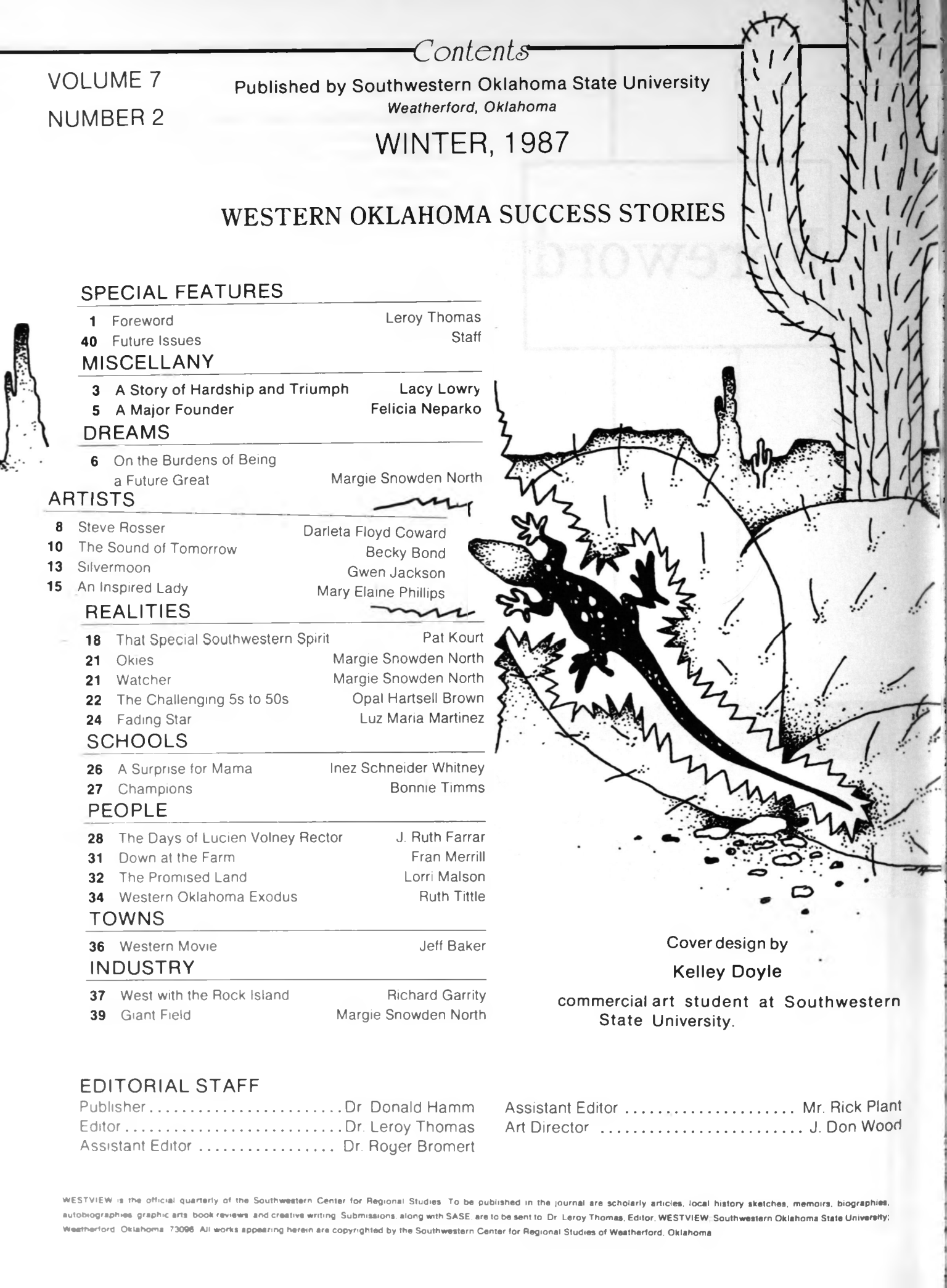
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# A STORY OF HARDSHIP AND TRIUMPH

By Lacy Lowry

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *As part of "Oklahoma Heritage Week" in 1986, students in the Gifted and Talented Program at Clinton Middle School wrote essays on local early-day men and women to enter in a statewide competition sponsored by the Oklahoma Heritage Center in Oklahoma City.*

*This first essay, by Lacy Lowry, was placed in the top twenty across the state among seventh through ninth graders.*

A new community, city, county, or state can be built only if many positive elements are present. Many natural resources make up its environment which nourishes new growth. A new community can grow without the purest water, the richest soil, or the most temperate climate.

There is one natural resource, however, that must be present to build any new community--the common strength of the community's men and women. Among the pioneers whose strength built Custer County and the city of Clinton was G. C. Wheeler. G. C. was born on January 1, 1885, in Hyde County, Missouri. He and his family homesteaded in a wagon to Washita County. His family consisted of his father, B. B. Wheeler, his mother Miriam, three daughters, and seven sons.

G. C. grew up in Washita County. He went to Southwestern College in Weatherford and went to work at Fay State Bank in Fay in 1908. He then bought and became president of the Oklahoma National Bank in Clinton in 1919. That year, the bank's capital surplus and undivided profits totaled approximately \$32,000. In 1958, they totaled \$400,000.

G. C. Wheeler made successful loans to people such as W. Erle White, new president of the multimillion dollar business, White's, Inc. He encouraged businessmen and farmers to keep trying during the depression of the 1930's. Many of those men would have given up but instead turned out to be very successful.

In addition to his devotion to banking, he was deeply involved with community affairs. He was president of the Clinton Chamber of Commerce and of the Rotary Club. He was county chairman of the Democratic Central Committee and a member of the board of deacons and the board of elders at the Presbyterian Church. He was also Southwestern District Chairman for the U. S. War Bond organization for 15 years. He was not only an organizer of the Oklahoma Public Expenditure Council but also served on the executive committee of that organization.

During his 56 years of banking, he survived many hardships as well as good times. Of the three banks in Clinton that closed on March 6, 1933, during the "bank holiday," only one reopened under the original ownership. That was Wheeler's Oklahoma National Bank. One of the banks reopened under new management and new charter, and the other one never reopened at all. G. C. Wheeler's strong management and keen judgment had seen his bank through the darkest days of banking.

Wheeler had other adversities in his life as well. Although he had four healthy children, one boy and three girls, he was preceded in death by his only son, a victim of a car accident. He also lost his first wife to illness, leaving him with three small children to rear, the youngest of whom was two years old. He lost his second wife to illness, too, leaving him alone with a fourth child to rear. In 1959, he sustained a massive stroke, which left him com-

pletely paralyzed on the left side. Nevertheless, through rehabilitation and stubborn determination, he continued to take an active part in banking and his community until his death in August of 1964.

Grover Cleveland Wheeler was a giant-sized man, six feet four inches tall, with a giant-sized love of banking, his family, his land, his church, and his community. His giant-sized drive and determination helped him develop banking and his county.

With men like G. C. Wheeler, a town may overcome many problems. Using this natural resource, cities can be built on the plains where the weather is hot, the mountains where it's cold, or the deserts where it's dry. Strong pioneering men and women can conquer all. ■

*LACY LOWRY, thirteen-year-old daughter of Cheryl and G. W. Lowry, Jr., plays piano and basketball; was a football cheerleader and a Science Fair participant.*



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# A MAJOR FOUNDER

By Felicia Neparko

A train line ran where there would be a town. J. L. Avant stood and looked around and decided there should be a town built.

Another man thought the east side of the Washita River would be a good place, but Avant had seen the Washita River flood, and the east side was under water. The four men finally agreed on the west side of the river.

Four different Indians owned the land the men wanted to build their town on. The government would allow the Indians to sell only eighty acres of their land. Before the sale could be final, Congress had to approve the sale of the four eighty-acre tracts.

Many people didn't think the town would last because four miles away, there was a thriving town, Arapaho. Avant thought it would be a good idea to have a town at the junction of railroad tracks because the passengers and their freight going to Arapaho were unloaded there and they would have a place to rest. As soon as the Indians agreed, Tom Hunt was sent to Washington, D.C. to seek Congress' approval.

Avant got a banker from Arapaho to finance the town. Later Tom Nance moved his bank to Clinton.

The men had a plan in case Congress didn't approve their bill. They had a feeling that they might not approve of it because it was coming near to the end of their session. The man they sent used their plan because Congress was starting to reject their proposal. Tom Nance introduced the proposal as a separate bill at the end of the session to assure the approval of Congress. As soon as this happened, Tom Nance sent a telegram to Avant and then returned home again.

Advertisement began nationwide for the sale of the townsite. They set a date of June, 1903 for the sale.

Their total advertisement cost was \$8,000-\$2,000 for each of the eighty-acre tracts. It seemed like a great deal of money, but it paid off in the final sale.

On the first day, the land brought \$25,000. Each of the four men got ten percent of the total profit of the sale. There were many salesmen hired to conduct the sale of the total 320 acres.

Almost overnight it became a city--from the quiet river valley owned by four Indians just months ago. Many people got off the trains that came through day and night. Most people were really glad that there was a place where they could stretch and visit with the townspeople and get a newspaper before they had to get back on the train and continue their long journey on the hot, dirty, noisy trains.

Most people wanted the name of the town to be Washita, but the town post-office officials refused. After "Washita" was knocked off the list along with many other names, they compromised and chose the name of Judge Clinton F. Irwin. He served as judge for Custer County for many years.

There were three original buildings in Clinton when our town was first established in 1903. The Clinton newspaper was first called THE CUSTER COUNTY CHRONICLE. The First National Bank was the second building in the town. It is now standing in its original place at Fifth and Frisco. This bank did quite well in the newly established town in "Indian Country." The other building was "The Townsite Office Building."

I feel that Avant was a major founder of Clinton, and he played a key part in actually having a town built. There's a street named after him, and our town's history files are full of information on him.

*FELICIA NEPARKO, daughter of Dr. Ed and Mary Neparko, is an eighth grader. Her hobbies include ballet, piano, and training dogs. Her favorite subjects are Math and Science.*

*Further essays from this collection will be published in future issues of WESTVIEW.*

*Illustration by Tony Neely*

# On The Burdens Of Being A Future Great

By Margie Snowden North



Illustration by Paul Stone

I fully expect someday to become an is-now (you know, the opposite of a has-been). I do some writing, sing a little, know some chords on both the piano and guitar, teach a passable Sunday School lesson, and my five children would vouch for my cooking.

I'm not sure yet on which area of endeavor I will suddenly, marvelously excel, rising dramatically to the top of that particular field. Frankly, that is not what concerns me.

My dilemma is that it is likely I am not leaving behind enough data for biographical purposes. I mean--who keeps letters anymore? (Who wrties them, for that matter?)

At one time I wondered why George

Washington, Abe Lincoln, and others wrote such loquacious letters. I believe I have the answer now. They assumed that public eminence would one day be their lots, and they knew the multitudes would hunger to know each intimate detail of their lives. Hence, the chatty letters. The ledgers. The diaries.

I used to keep diaries ("April 3, 1977: Planted squash today; still too cold for okra"). No one has bothered to inquire about where I keep them. It is a fear of mine that they will be fortuitously disposed of in my absence (Ben likes a clean closet). Then no one would ever know (for example) that in the summer of '64 I sold my first story and received a small fortune for it (So it was \$12.50,

to be more exact. I can assure you that in 1964 that \$12.50 did constitute a small fortune to the North family.)

I have a cousin, Shirley, with whom I exchanged some extraordinary correspondence back in our pre-teen years. I trust she has saved the letters she received from me because they will give my future biographers some vivid insight into my personality. ("Dear Shirley," I once wrote. "How are you? I am fine. We picked cotton again today. It sure was cold. . ." and on and on.)

If Shirley will send the letters to me at the same address I had before (Rt. 1, Erick, Oklahoma), I will see that she is properly reimbursed upon my *annus mirabilis*. (For those of you who have



had no formal training in Latin, that phrase is defined on page 55 of the **RANDOM HOUSE DICTIONARY**. I would give the definition straight-out, but you never see that done.)

I am sure that my future adherents will be as indebted to Shirley as I. After all, this is all *pro bono publico* (Ibid., p. 1055).

(Speaking of letters, may I insert a notice here? On June 26, 1969, I received a personal letter from Andrae Crouch. This was while he was a little-known choir director in Pacoima, California. If anyone is presently working on his bio, the letter—or at least a photo-copy—may be purchased for a price. Contact me at 405-526-3685.

It is the little things that make up a life—and believe me, I have experienced many little things. So George Washington had Valley Forge. Personally, I think the day Justin had his surprise birthday party (I was the one surprised) and I glanced out to find 29 youngsters storming off the bus and toward the house—well, that would tighten any loosely structured history of anybody's life. I hope it will go into the biography. But I'm concerned that everybody has forgotten that day except me (and

perhaps the little lad who was knocked out with the baseball bat. He threatened to sue, but I was able to convince him that it could happen to practically anyone when she is attempting to restore order. I certainly didn't *try* to do it.)

It is truly a problem, this lack of biographical resources that I foresee. A possible recourse would be to simply write an autobiography now, before success explodes in my face, while there is sufficient time, before the basic facts of my life become distended with the telling and re-telling.

The public would have a rare opportunity to know the real me. There would be no fluff. Everything would be straight from the shoulder, right off the cuff. I believe I owe it to my public to allow them to see me as I was. (And, by the way, I will probably tell in the autobiography exactly why Andrae Crouch wrote to me, in case anyone is interested.)

I intend to start researching right away. I'll begin by digging out all the old check stubs (for they tell reams about people). I believe I will begin writing more letters instead of chancing phone calls. ("My dear Mr. Masters,

your account is now 60 days past due. A payment from you would greatly enhance our ability to see to our own debts, which are many.")

For that matter, I might even ask folks to record the phone calls I *do* make. ("Hello. I'm calling about what I believe to be a *drastic* mistake in our water bill. . .") I will immediately begin keeping a more detailed diary. If George Washington can be remembered as writing at age 14, "Rise early, that by habit it may become familiar, agreeable, healthy, and profitable. It may be irksome for a while to do this, but that will soon wear off," surely my maxim, "Early to bed and early to rise makes sense but is well nigh impossible when you have five children" would certainly be noteworthy to my future following.

Yes, I'd better get started. A person never knows when she will be unexpectedly confronted with success. There will be so little time then. And writing my memoirs certainly beats just sitting here. ■

*MARGIE SNOWDEN NORTH, certainly no new name to regular WESTVIEW readers, has once again entertained us with humorous appeal.*

*"Your Community Owned Bank"*



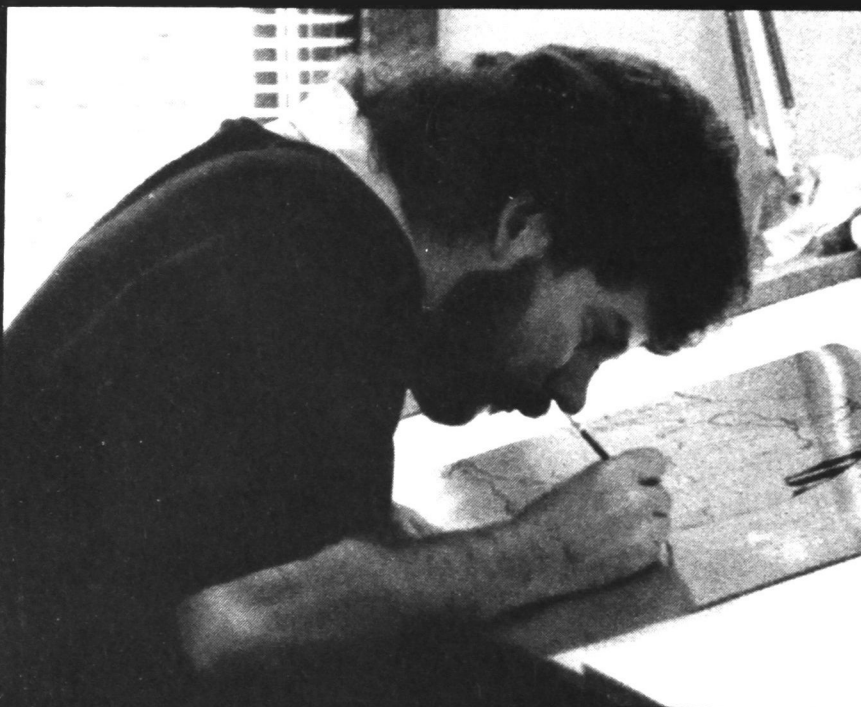
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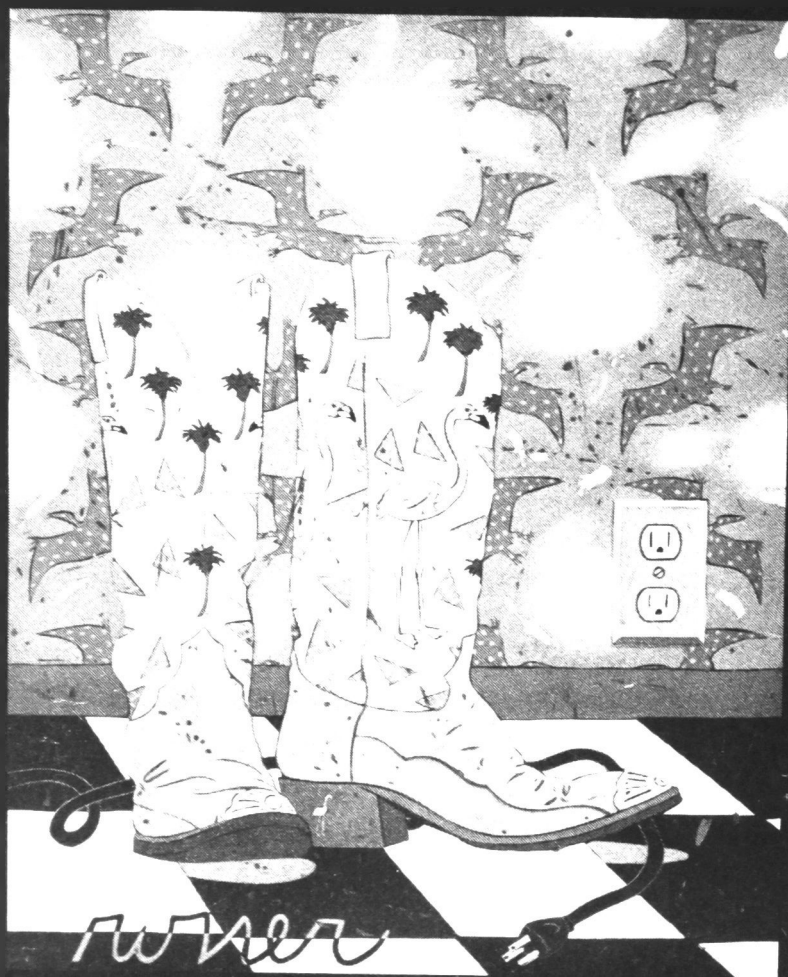
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## Lookeba Painter of Cowboys &amp; Indians



*Photograph of the artist by Darleta Coward.*



**"Flamingo Boots with Pterodactylus"**

**Steve Rosser**, resident of Lookeba, Oklahoma, is a fast-rising star in the field of contemporary Southwestern art. His large canvases portray powerful images indigenous to this region and frequently incorporate symbolic elements reflective of other cultures.

Steve has earned his Bachelor's Degree in Art from Southwestern Oklahoma State University and a Master of Arts degree from the University of Tulsa.

Beginning his exhibition record at the Uptown Art Gallery in Oklahoma City, Steve has also enjoyed phenomenal success in Santa Fe and Chicago. He is presently preparing for his next exhibition at the C. G. Rein Gallery in Scottsdale, Arizona. A full-page color reproduction of Rosser's "Singing Shaman" appeared in the November, '87 issue of ART IN AMERICA.



Photographs of the paintings provided  
by the artist.

Turner



"A Cowboy's Better Half"



"Shades of the West"



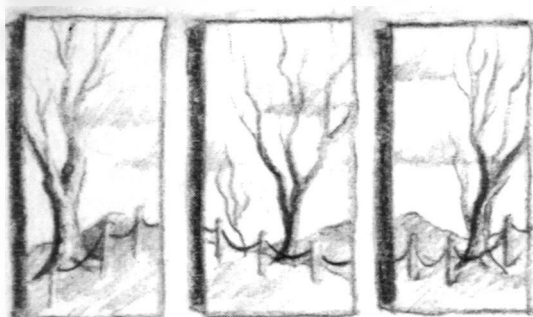
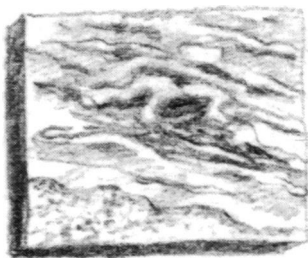
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# THE SOUND OF TOMORROW

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY BECKY BOND





the hall, and her mother always worried too much about Jessica's special "little problem," anyway.

But what would she do without Abby? Jessie's world was shattered.

Slipping out of bed, the petite teenager stepped silently to the north wall. There, she searched desperately through the details of each of the 30 or 40 paintings hanging in their order of completion. The family scenes, the seascapes, the landscapes, and the portraits. Jessica moved across the hardwood floor slowly and squinted through the shadows at the lonely still lifes. They, too, held no answers for her.

Jessie's lips tightened, then slowly quivered. She shook her head slowly from side to side as she shuffled backward toward the bed.

Her breathing increased again, and more tears streaked the delicate features of her face.

Her steps began to falter. In a silent motion, Jessie reached to the bedpost but missed. Her balance was thrown off as she awkwardly fell to the floor. Pain gripped Jessica's arm, but only momentarily. She blinked, stunned. There was something she had neglected, something more important.

There, under her bed, was a painting she had yet to hang. Without haste, Jessie crawled to her knees and gingerly pulled out the painting. Her eyes widened as she touched the unfinished landscape. She was...breathless. It was the very last project she and Abby had worked on together. "The Sunrise."

Jessica eased the canvas onto her bed and smoothed the sheets around it. She quickly brushed back her long, flowing hair with the flick of a nimble wrist, as if to ward off anything that would interfere with her view.

As her fingers moved along the weaves of the canvas and onto a few smooth strokes of the acrylic paint, Jessie could almost envision Mrs. Whitney sitting with her. A smile spread over her youthful face. She remembered Abby's graceful hands fumbling through the words: "Sunrise...always another sunrise," in her self-made beautifully unique style of sign language. Mrs. Whitney was a special, one-of-a-kind person.

Jessica froze. She spun toward her clock. "6:24 a.m.," she told herself. She ran to the window by her bed and pressed her cheek to the cold, wet pane, straining to see if light

had yet dawned. Jessie sighed with relief; the edge of darkness was still touching the distant horizon line. With a sparkling smile she glided to her closet. Her feet bounced with excitement as she grabbed her favorite jeans, sweater, and shoes.

No one was in sight as Jessie peered from her bedroom door. She was still struggling to get an arm through her sweater sleeve while rushing down the hall, but managed to remember to leave a note for her mother. "I hope she won't always have to worry about me," sighed Jessie. Yet, without

*Even though she was never privileged to tune in to voices, or laughter, or noise in general, her heart was fine-tuned to one thing this morning, and there was only one more block to go.*

Jessica tossed in her sleep again. As so many times before, she began to breathe unevenly, and she could feel her eyes beginning to water.

"No, Abby, No!" A dreaded thought pounded over and over in her heart and mind. "Don't leave me! Please don't leave me, Abby!"

Jessie bolted upright on her bed. She was sweating. She was cold. As she hugged her bare shoulders, Jessica scanned her moonlit room in an effort to place herself.

Her relentless digital clock read 5:07, or was it 6:07? Jessie rubbed her blurry eyes, wiped her teary cheeks, and took a deep breath. "6:07 a.m.," she told herself. "Exactly two months and four days since Abby. . .," well, since Jessie's last painting lesson from the renowned Abigale Whitney.

What a wonderful, talented person Mrs. Whitney was! "Abby's" words were as flowing and descriptive as her brush on canvas. To think that she had refused a professorship "to waste her time on me," thought Jessica.

Jessie's sobs came heavy. She covered her mouth in order not to awaken her family. Her parents' room was just down



hesitation, she firmly set the note down, lifted her chin a little, and turned toward the door.

Once outside, Jessica slipped her other arm into her warm cardigan. She took a long, deep breath of the morning air. The smell of dew on the wet grass was stimulating. The sky was still grayish, and only a slight crimson glow eased itself over the rolling hillside. As she strained to see the treetops peeping over the city buildings, offices, and shops, Jessie pulled her golden hair from under her sweater and slipped on her warm mittens from her pockets. These were special, too. Abby had loved them almost as much as Jessie did.

Leaves were falling with the swirling wind. Tiny dust bowls lifted from the paved streets and raced out of sight. Cars and trucks whizzed by, even at this early hour. Cityfolk of all ages passed in front of, to the side of, and behind her. All were scurrying to and fro, most of them heading to their shops or work, for Jessica had been here before. Even the scampering dogs and lazy cats that crossed her path didn't bother Jessica. She never faltered from the same route she had always taken.

Despite the frantic atmosphere of city life, Jessica couldn't even hear a falling feather because she was engulfed in a world of her own: the private, often lonely world of the deaf. To Jessica, however, sometimes her "little problem" was a downright blessing.

Even though she was never privileged to tune in to voices, or laughter, or noise in general, her heart was fine-tuned to one thing this morning, and there was only one more block to go.

Finally she rounded the corner by Garland's Market at the end of Main and jogged down the slope behind it. The grass had grown taller since her last visit. Now she could smell the evergreens and the damp bark from trees that were losing their shrubbery. Jessie picked up her pace.

She could see the grayness being lifted and replaced by a warm ray of color. Oh, how she yearned for her mother's camera. Before she realized it, Jessica had flown into the clearing. She nearly tripped over the rocks she and Abby used to sit on to paint the surrounding scenes. She had made it just in time.

Jessica felt her heartbeat change. She stared at the rock where Abby used to sit. Suddenly, she wondered how many other eager students had shared Abby's attention, in this same clearing. For a moment, jealousy came over her. But her selfishness disappeared just as quickly. Only she, Mrs. Whitney, and her nosey little brother knew of this lovely spot. They had found it together. As for Johnny, he tagged along once in a while to "protect" his older sister, but she loved him for it anyway.

With her back against Abby's rock, Jessica tilted her head upward. She grinned softly as the sunrise developed. A peach haze faded into a glimmering yellow. Ever so slowly, the splash of warm pastels melted into the distance. The central lemon-yellow ball vibrated upward as a sliver of scarlet caressed its burning edges. Whispers of gray mists were pulled across the sky like stretched cotton. If it were not for two or three splotches of trees in the foreground, the horizon line would be perfect. Of course, "Life's never perfect," as Abby would say.

Jessica closed her eyes to savor the view she had just witnessed and to tuck that memory far in the deep treasures of her mind forever. She inhaled the cool, clean air. Relaxation tingled through her senses as she rubbed her shoulders with her mitten-clad hands.

The "young artist" within her loved crisp, clear dawns. The "rest" loved wearing big sweaters, warm clothes, and fur-lined boots. Most of all, though, she dearly treasured her mittens.

She opened her eyes to look over her handmade pair. A grin warmed her face as she remembered when and how she had learned to knit them. So many stitches were out of place! So many rows were accidentally left out! Abby, however, beamed with delight throughout that wonderful afternoon of knitting, and she literally raved about the mittens after they were finished. She was so tender, yet forceful in an almost deceiving way. Jessie reflected that Abby had an uncanny ability to get people involved in whatever she wanted them to do.

Jessie was glad they had decided not to apint on that cold, rainy day. Abby was, too. She changed the lesson plan and taught knitting instead. As it turned out, her sewing served as a color project, also. Especially with the crazy scraps of yarn Abby had brought in her shopping bag of a purse.

While Jessie stitched together one green mitten and knitted another green, red, and yellow one, Abigale was working on more than just her own knitting. She was creating much more than Jessie could imagine.

Jessie remembered how Abby suddenly became very still. Her knitting needles were lying in her lap. She looked so tired. Then, Abby seemed to snap out of the daze she was in, and she directed a warm smile at Jessie.

She lifted her aged hands slowly and began to speak to Jessica in her gently but awkward sign language. Jessie stopped her knitting and watched as Abby spelled out her words with her hands and her expressions.

"What will you do tomorrow, Jessica?" Abby motioned.

Jessica only shrugged her shoulders. She started to knit purple yarn into the wristband. Then she held up her mitten-to-be and smiled as if to joke, "Maybe I should be knitting tomorrow!"

Abby grinned. She caught Jessie's eye so "Jess" could read her lips.

"Will you please paint the sunrise I showed you?" Abby mouthed slowly.

Jessica hated it when people spoke extremely slow and exaggerated, but it was funny when Mrs. Whitney did it. A smile. A nod.

"Yes, yes," replied Abby, relieved. "Good, good. But what about real classes in school? You'll meet so many fine teachers, Jessica!" she mouthed, excitedly.

The thought of another instructor caught Jessica off guard. Mrs. Abigale Whitney was the most famous artist around, although she had officially retired several years before. Jessie needed no one else, or so she thought.

She dropped her needles and picked up her sketchbook. With one quick, clean motion, she drew the front of the local public school and marked a huge red "X" over it.

*"No matter what the hardship, Jessica, there is always a tomorrow. Always more to learn, and always another sunrise."*



# Silvermoon

*important trademark*

By Gwen Jackson



## Caddo Artist Spanning Two Cultures

Silvermoon spanned two cultures with his paintings. Red roses on black velvet. A butterfly on his wife's stockings. A picture of Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. A lone buffalo bull atop a knoll. A solitary Indian brave smoking his pipe. These works were part of the white man's world and the Caddo world. An Indian ahead of his time, Silvermoon traveled between both cultures.

Michael James Martin was born in the Caddo village near

Binger, Oklahoma, in 1891. He lived in a tepee and later a log house with open fireplace. His mother died when he was two years old, so he was reared by his grandmother, Choah. As a young boy, Michael peeled labels from cans. He crushed berries in the cans and then painted on the backs of the labels using bird feathers for brushes. He frequently had to leave his art to hoe corn or herd his grandmother's horses and cattle.

Michael attended St. Patrick's School in Anadarko, which was a Catholic boarding school. He took frequent holidays from St. Patrick's, however. Once he got lonesome for home and walked across the prairie. After four days, an Indian policeman on horseback came for him. He was placed on the horse behind the policeman. Four or five miles from home, Michael slipped quietly off the horse, ran home, and hid. The policeman returned and found him.

When Michael was fifteen, he went to Carlisle Industrial School. As part of his training, he worked in the Famous Shoe Repair Shop in Phillipsburg, New Jersey, earning \$12 a month. He also worked in the farm shop at Carlisle. He received good academic grades and excellent conduct reports, but he took holidays from Carlisle just as he had from St. Patrick's. In a Ft. Worth newspaper interview, Michael told of playing football with Jim Thorpe and running the 440 and 880 in track. He missed the Olympic tryouts because of his runaway status and regretted his truancy.

After Carlisle, Michael joined the Army and was sent to France. However, World War I ended, and Corporal Martin came home. Michael used the name *Silvermoon* and became involved with Paul Whiteman's band. He played the flute for the Youngbloods, an all-girl chorus who wore white evening dresses. He took stand-in movie parts for Richard Dix and other actors. A feature in which he starred was *LIBERTY BOYS OF 76*.

Michael had a German Shepherd named Chief Geronimo. He was competitive with Rin Tin Tin in several movies. Chief was also a model for animal-life sculptors in New York.

Silvermoon worked in the library of the American Museum of Natural History in New York, translating the Caddo language for a Caddo Indian-English dictionary. He also posed for Hubard Zettling, sculptor at the museum; and Silvermoon's likeness was used by one of the companies manufacturing Big Chief tablets.

The 1920's and early 1930's were busy years for Silvermoon, but he never ceased painting. According to a New York newspaper, Michael was painting in Central Park, and his wife became restless. He told her if she wasn't still, he would paint her socks. She dared him, so Michael painted a butterfly on her socks. A crowd gathered and from this incident came the patent for decorating women's hose.

Silvermoon's Indian heritage was reflected in his painting. He grew up listening to old Caddo men tell of trading with the French in Louisiana. At one tribal council, many braves came with axes and hoes across their shirts as decoration. He remembered when a group of Caddos traveled north to Sioux country to learn the Ghost Dance ritual and songs. This group established an annual ghost dance near Anadarko.

Silvermoon continued to paint on unusual bases such as buckskin, rough wood, velvet, and murals on various textures of cloth. His favorite models were Oklahoma landscapes, Quanah Parker, buffalo, and his daughter LaRue. She was Indian princess at Anadarko in 1956 and later married one of Quanah Parker's grandsons.

Wynema Lindesmith, who was married to Silvermoon for more than thirty years, said in an interview that the Caddo artist was asked to paint an eight-foot mural of a wagon train with Indians in the background. The mural hung in an Oklahoma City bar for years and when the area was renovated, it was taken to the Cowboy Hall of Fame. She related that they never had to pay a doctor bill when they lived in Oklahoma City because their family physician, Dr. Dupree, wanted Silvermoon's paintings. Many others felt the same way. Mrs. Jerry Douvall owned thirty-seven of his water colors, oils, and panel wood paintings which lined the walls of her San Bernadino residence. Midwestern University Museum in Wichita Falls, Texas, has twelve of his paintings. Comanche School purchased five. Today, his art is considered collectors' items.

Michael James Martin was away from home for weeks at a time, but his spirit was in the heartland of America. He loved the golden sunsets, buffalo on the prairie, and his Caddo heritage. Although his art shows took him from New York to California, Michael Martin--or Silvermoon--has remained in the minds of those who knew him. Like the Plains Indians, who followed the buffalo herds, Michael followed art shows. He supported his family of thirteen despite his Grandmother Choah's warning that an artist can't make a living. through the successes of his talents, Silvermoon has spanned the two cultures that he loved most.■

*GWEN JACKSON, a graduate of SOSU who enjoys researching stories of early Oklahomans, teaches reading in the Amber-Pocasset School.*

## SOUND OF TOMORROW — CONT'D FROM PAGE 12.

Mrs. Whitney frowned at Jessie's reaction and slowly mouthed, "No matter what the hardship, Jessica, there is always a tomorrow. Always more to learn, and always another sunrise."

The wind picked up its speed as leaves were tossed around Jessica's feet. She blinked her eyes and swept away a tear as reality returned.

The sun was high now, and its golden touch seemed to bring the entire clearing to life. As she stepped past Abby's rock, Jess took one more look over her shoulder at the blowing leaves and the sparkling sky. Her eye moved to the horizon where tomorrow's sun would rise.

Jessica knew she'd come back here, paints and all. She had a strong desire to welcome the next day, thanks to Abby. As for more schooling, why not? In fact, that's the best idea

she'd had in ages!

In honor and respect for her teacher, Jessica was determined now to finish "The Sunrise" and to paint many more.

As she faced the new day, Jessica gripped her colorful mittens tightly and knew that her tomorrows would be much brighter--not through sound, but through her art and her dearest friend and teacher, the late and lovable Mrs. Abigale Whitney.■

*BECKY BOND of Morrison, 1986 SOSU Homecoming Queen, shows another talent, fiction writing, in this issue. In the past 5 issues, she has helped Art Director Don Wood with layout, paste-up, and illustration.*



Marjorie Skeen

In the warp and woof of the tapestry that is Western Oklahoma, some of the brightest threads have been woven by Marjorie Brannon Skeen.

Born in Mt. Park, Oklahoma, Marjorie began her schooling in a traditional one-room school in the community of Shiloah. The Mullins Consolidated School came next when Marjorie's parents, George B. Brannon and Vera Sanford Brannon, sent her to the new school near Mt. Park, at the age of nine. It was there her creative talents had their first stirrings.

Marjorie was in fourth grade when she wrote her first poem. Her teacher, Miss Jennie Bills, assigned this creative task. Marjorie wrote on the subject of an experience of observing butterflies. Her theme was that of seeing a yellow butterfly one day and a black one the next. There were yellow spots on the black butterfly's wings, so she presumed it had fallen into black ink, she recalls.

When she advanced to high school in Carnegie, Marjorie began drawing so much in her textbooks that they became eagerly sought after by other students for the illustrations in the margins. Marjorie admits that she spent considerable time drawing but managed through the years to make the school's honor rolls.

On her graduation from Carnegie High in 1936, she entered Southwestern State College in Weatherford, forty miles from Carnegie. Being an energetic and very creative person, she immersed herself in campus life. She wrote a humor column called "Strokes from a Sagebrush" for the student newspaper.

# An Inspired Lady

By Mary Elaine Phillips

Photographs by Richard Ramirez

She recalls two quotations from her column--"Professors should know that big oaks from little acorns grow and not be too discouraged with little nuts!" and "College girls who use cold cream at breakfast use vanishing cream at class time."

Those in authority must have recalled, at this time, the Biblical admonition "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine," as Marjorie was asked to serve on the campus Morale Committee.

Remembering with fondness professors at Southwestern who influenced her, Marjorie recalls her talented art teacher, Miss Myrle Kelly, who was very helpful and understanding.

Later, Richard Goetz of Oklahoma City guided her in polishing her skills as an artist and teacher. His teaching was a major influence in her life.

During her Southwestern years, Marjorie studied creative writing with Mrs. Edna Muldrow, after which Miss Elsie Shoemaker taught her journalism skills. She admits that all her instructors were great and positive influences on her life. Miss Shoemaker once left a note in her box that read, "Marjorie, you would make an A-1 reporter; all you need is a little self-inflicted discipline."

At a Mother's Day assembly, President Walter Isle had one of Marjorie's

poems read since she was too timid to read it herself.

The appreciation shown for her poem by the audience gave her a special impetus to create more. She was grateful for their understanding of her feelings about life.

Marjorie never attempted in writing or painting to emulate anyone. Instead, she created from a need as a heart beats for a body to survive.

Following her college years in Weatherford, in 1939 Marjorie married J. B. Skeen, a resident of Carnegie. With Americans still in the throes of the Great Depression and John Steinbeck's *GRAPES OF WRATH* just off the press, the brave couple set forth to live on his one-dollar-a-day salary as a skilled mechanic.

The newlyweds rented a two-bedroom house in Carnegie for twelve dollars a month. The house was only partially furnished, providing Marjorie a good excuse to haunt local used-furniture stores for gems to give their love nest a "Skeen Decorator's" touch.

Marjorie recalls with fondness their first pieces of antique furniture: "When I found a piece of furniture I could afford, I would buy it and strip it down to its natural state. Then I hand rubbed each piece lovingly. I love the



"Arkansas Aristocrat"

soft glow of natural wood. Its patina fascinates me. Desks are my weakness. We have seven in our house now."

Employment for women outside the home in 1940 was mostly nonexistent. But Marjorie was energetic, and she began teaching. Her first pupil was Dorothy Queen Ivins. She wanted so much to take art lessons that Marjorie let her dust the furniture to pay the twenty-five cents a lesson. Soon Marjorie acquired another art student, Robert Mize, a grade-school student, whose grandmother paid for his lessons. Robert had health problems; therefore, he was unable to participate in strenuous activities with his peers. Marjorie enjoyed teaching her young students.

Eventually, students from as far away as Ardmore and more than a dozen other towns, came to Carnegie for her expert instruction.

Marjorie said, "When my reputation as an art instructor gained more recognition, I had as many as twenty-four students in my classes at one time."

During those years, the Skeens had children growing up. Kent was born in 1941. Later came Gary Jon, Toni Danielle, and Connie Jill to care for.

The children grew to have creative talents in woodworking, mechanical drawing, and needlework-but only as hobbies. They learned to appreciate their mother's fondness for antiques and their restoration. They often took note of her developing talents and reputation in the arts. This helped them to appreciate and develop a discriminating eye for art and writing.

Before long, J. B. acquired his own garage, which afforded them more income. Marjorie continued to collect antiques of several varieties. Eventually, she had more than enough to furnish their home, so she converted the carport to a shop to house her antiques and art-supply business.

Her husband, with his wry sense of humor still intact from Marjorie's affliction of "collectivitis," once said, "I never know when I get home whether I will find the same furniture or not. Marjorie is a good salesman!"

As early as her high-school days, Marjorie was an achiever in writing. In the 1930's, the OKLAHOMAN and TIMES newspaper editor was brave enough to publish poetry. There was a section titled "Today's Best Poem." Marjorie's poems were chosen five out of six times.



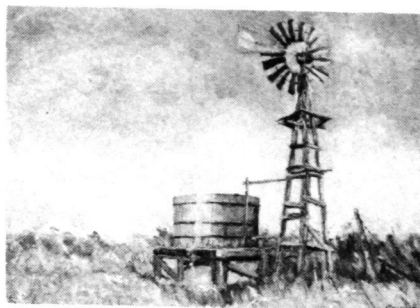
"The Green Wagon"

"I don't know whether anyone in the family was particularly impressed, but it was a great boost to my morale and definitely encouragement enough to keep me trying," Marjorie said.

Since that modest beginning, this artist, writer, teacher, businesswoman, wife, and mother combination has earned more honors than can be enumerated here. To name only a few is permissible. A contest sponsored by World of Poetry of Sacramento, California, resulted in Marjorie's winning a silver award for a poem titled "Nuclear Russian Roulette." An awards banquet was scheduled in the Orlando World Center of Florida, where Vincent Price was to read her poem and present the award.

Marjorie recalled, "I was not financially able and entirely too timid to attend the ceremonies, so I sent my regrets." Later, she won a Fifth Place award for a poem titled "An Old Love Calls" sponsored by the same publication.

She confesses that a pat on the head on her own home turf is really more satisfying. This reward she has also received. Because of her energetic community efforts for things cultural in Carnegie, the first Arts and Crafts Show was held in 1981. It is now an annual event.



"Mill by the Sea"

Carnegie residents, past and present students of Marjorie Brannon Skeen's, with the cooperation of the Carnegie Chamber of Commerce, presented Marjorie with a plaque inscribed "For thirty-three years of service to the Carnegie community."

Marjorie is a charter member of the Oklahoma Museum of Art, which was organized in 1957 in Oklahoma City with thirty-seven members. This helped take the arts out into a broader area of our state. Her first exhibit in Oklahoma City was a watercolor titled "On the Road to Gotebo," depicting a duck in a barnyard after a spring shower.

This artist has won many First, Second, Third, and Honorable Mention awards as well as numerous purchase awards in Oklahoma and elsewhere. She has had over thirty one-man shows. Her paintings hang in public buildings and in private collections throughout many states.



"Arkansas Aristocrat #2"

She is listed in WHO'S WHO IN INTERNATIONAL POETRY with works in national publications, anthologies, and state publications. She has won the Zoe Tilghman Memorial Award; the Donor's Award; the Jennie Harris Oliver Award twice; and numerous other awards through the Poetry Society of Oklahoma.

She credits good teachers with whom she has studied, self-discipline, and a firm belief that God helps her in all things for her success.

Marjorie admits to some "warts" on her character. For example, she confesses, "I'm not a very well-organized person. The good Lord just put so much feeling into me that it has to come out. When I become inspired, I work fast. I am impatient with reworking, so I do little after the first draft is



out of my system. It is like abstaining from food when on a diet; I am famished, and I gorge on painting or writing. This makes up for periods when I cannot pick up brush or pen.

"I would like to say this habit doesn't give me a guilty conscience as I ignore my housework, but eventually I cannot produce because it enslaves me. I do not maintain a work schedule. I work when the SPELL is on!"

She thought when the children had left for "lives of their own," she would have more time, but not so; she realizes that with time she has lost some stamina. It takes her longer to do less. Her husband, for the most part, is wheelchair-bound. He is her constant companion in her home studio where she works at an antique easel. Her set of art brushes stands in an heirloom pitcher on an antique table.

In retrospect, Marjorie is proud of her students in art and of their accomplishments. Her first student, Dorothy Queen Ivins, then a high-school student, has now distinguished herself in many fields of art. She won awards in fashion illustration in the Oklahoma City Art Directors' Club. Later, she placed third in the 1986 international competition of Art Instruction Schools

of Minneapolis. This honor was followed by her becoming the Director of "The Fashion Group," a group of executive women in the fashion industry, of Oklahoma City, for two years. She attended their meetings in New York and Paris. Dorothy has owned her own advertising studio in Oklahoma City since 1964.

Even though Dorothy studied at Oklahoma City University and had instruction in portrait painting from Laverne Walker, she says of her early association with Marjorie, her first teacher, "I feel that Marjorie sowed the seeds of creativity in my fertile brain, and I went on to water and harvest my artistic crop. My time under her instruction will always be one of my fondest memories."

At the request and insistence of her former students, Marjorie has had a very informative book on her teaching techniques published. The Preface to the book reads in part:

"It is at the insistence of my students that I am compiling these notes. They are merely pen point tips, little buds of information and inspiration, imparted to them over more than thirty years of teaching.

"My hopes are that these tiny buds

will blossom into full flower, and painting suggestions from these will become one of life's best arranged bouquets, gathered from my garden of thoughts on color, composition, inspiration, texture, originality, and all the components that make a work of art."

In the final weaving of her life's tapestry, Marjorie Brannon Skeen perhaps sums up her life in this, her latest poem.

#### INVENTORY

In my search  
For talents and careers  
I've tried a great number:  
Poet, artist  
Antique lady,  
Museum curator  
Teacher,  
Lover, wife  
Mother, and  
Grandmother;  
Now here I sit  
With my magnifying  
Glass,  
No longer trying  
To find myself,  
But wondering  
Where I went. ■

*MARY ELAINE PHILLIPS, who is both a writer and an artist, lives in Durant.*



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# That Special Southwestern Spirit

Photographs by Darleta Floyd Coward

By Pat Kourt



Editor's Addendum: The 1987-1988 Lady Bulldogs team made a good start by winning the twelfth annual Queens' Classic at Wayland Baptist University in Plainview, Texas, on November 28, 1987. Two Southwestern players--Sharon Blair and Patrice Malphus--were named to the All-Tournament Team, and Lady Bulldog Stephanie Wyatt was

honored as the "Most Valuable Player" of the tournament. The Ladies' 68-62 win over the Wayland Flying Queens in the Finals marked the first time the Queens had been defeated by an NAIA team on their home court in Hutcherson Center, which was constructed in 1971.

The early 1980's found Western Oklahoma spotlighted in the nation as the place to find work, to strike oil, and to get rich. But--that economic high soon became a depressing low. Hundreds of workers were quickly unemployed, and oil rigs (the "Oklahoma state tree" at the time) became scarce. With uncertainty as the prevalent mood in 1981, most people in the area needed a morale boost or a glimpse of success. The Southwestern State Lady Bulldogs basketball team of Weatherford produced just that. They provided a spirited sparkle which still reminds the nation that Western Oklahoma continues to boom--at least in women's collegiate basketball.

That Lady Bulldog sparkle began as a glint of an idea in the mind of Southwestern's president, Dr. Leonard Campbell, who wanted a competitive women's basketball program to be developed. The college of five thousand students dropped out of the AIAW (Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women) and joined the NAIA (National Association of Athletics), which is comprised of approximately 550 small colleges. Next, six basketball scholarships were set up to garner top players from Oklahoma and surrounding states.

Most crucial of Campbell's spring decisions was the hiring of John Loftin, who was a fourteen-year veteran coach. His established record showed 243 wins and 65 losses at various Texas high schools and Murray State Junior College in Tishomingo. A native of Tulia, Texas, Loftin believed in a philosophy that a good basketball player is someone much like himself who persevered at shooting baskets on a dirt court beside the chicken house on his family's farm.

Ironically, on the same day Coach Loftin was hired, Kelli Litsch, a high-school All-American from Fay, Oklahoma, informed Southwestern officials and Loftin that she was turning down USC and Louisiana Tech to become a Lady Bulldog. She wanted to remain close to her hometown fans and family who had supported her since grade school.

Along with Litsch that first year, Mary Champion, who had been a star guard at Connors State Junior College, left her studies at the University of Science and Arts in Chickasha and



rekindled her basketball expertise under Loftin's guidance.

In addition, Chelly Belanger of Weatherford, a student at Colorado State University, signed with Southwestern. Anita Foster, a bank teller who played center on a Dallas summer league, moved to Weatherford for the fall semester. Pat Jacques, Foster's high-school teammate, joined her at SOSU. Jan "Cheese" Cheadle moved to Southwestern after an All-State quality career at Carnegie High School. Too, Deana English, an All-Stater from Elmore City and Fletcher's Susan Pueschel brought more talent. Mindy Mayfield of Yukon returned to play her sophomore year. Junior team members included Vickie Seal and Susan Mounts, who transferred from Western Oklahoma State and Northern Junior College respectively.

The strenuous recruiting of Coach

Loftin definitely reaped rewards. He began long practices the first week of September to prepare for the 1981-1982 season. Thel Shelby of Hollis served as team trainer while Demetriss Beacham acted as manager.

In early January, the Lady Bulldogs were ranked Number 1 and had 11 wins with no losses. The team averaged 73 points a game, and the number of spectators crowding into the Rankin Williams Fieldhouse grew from 300 in November to more than 2000 in January. Loftin called it a "fairy tale." In March the new NAIA National Champions had won 34 games with no losses, and Loftin was named "Coach of the Year." The team scored 241 points in the national tournament, averaging 80.3 points a game. They scored 99 field goals for a tournament high. Kelli Litsch won the coveted MVP award. The dazzle had begun!

The next season was practically a repeat. A former Murray State forward, Dee Dee Woodfork, proved to be a top recruit. Loftin described her as one of the "quickest, best jumpers" in women's basketball. Carie Kephart, Canton, and Joanna Freeman, Moore, were freshman teammates who joined Theresa Patterson, Pittsburgh, and Mary Scarlett, Clinton, as new Lady Bulldogs. The team averaged 67.1 points and outscored opponents by 12.7 points. With a 30-4 season record, the women reaped the rewards of the experience of their first championship year. Anita Foster, Kelli Litsch, and Mary Champion were named to the NAIA All-Tournament Team with Litsch spotlighted as the "Most Valuable Player" again. Coach Loftin enjoyed his top coach title once more. Kemper Arena in Kansas City had proved to belong to the Ladies again.

That second season of victory was climaxed with an appreciation banquet at which 300 area fans toasted the team's success and organized the Booster Club. It was led by Charlie Williams of the Security State Bank. They could hardly wait for the 1983-1984 opening game. Some fans like Pickle Ice of Fay were described by SPORTS ILLUSTRATED writer Jill Leiber as "fiends" as far as being devoted followers of every Southwestern game. Ice remarked to the reporter, "I'll sell a cow if I have to, to get myself to the nationals."

Just as enthusiastic as Ice were Doyle and Fay Jackson, who often treated the team players to dinners. Monty McCrary of Fay has compiled more than seven scrapbooks filled with the Lady Blues' memorabilia; many articles and pictures are from periodicals throughout the nation.

However, enthusiasm at its height for the team was summed up by Weatherford-KBXR radio sportscaster Chuck Edwards with his favorite broadcast expression "Holy Guacamole!"

In September, 1983, five of the team players were joined by several new players. Among them were Cari Hayes, an All-American guard from Connors Junior College, Diana Dees, who had played for Loftin at Murray State, along with Shorna Coffey, Leah Carpenter, and Shelly Brown. Also, Ellisia Fountain, Desiree Bowers, and Kim Fennelly brought strength to the team. Thel Shelby served as Loftin's optimistic

assistant coach while Jason Maxwell, trainer, and Beryl Sifford, manager, completed the Lady Bulldog squad.

By the second week of December, the team had dwindled in number. Foster, Litsch, Coffey, Cheadle, Dees, Fountain, Mayfield, and Woodfork were the only teammates who remained or who were uninjured.

What was Loftin's third season at Southwestern to hold in store? Optimism was still high among players and fans. With a 31-1 win-loss record, the Ladies became Bi-District Champions. Although the sparkle may have dimmed a bit from the previous two years, the 1983-1984 season was quite commendable.

Fans of the 1984-1985 basketball season were eager for another few months of excitement, anticipation, and, hopefully, a national title. Helping the team throughout the season were freshman Angie McBrayer (Weatherford), Dane Ferguson (Custer City), and Pendra Hamar (Hydro). Marilu Dunard of Troy, Missouri, was an asset with her frequent assists and rebounds. Also, veteran players Lisa Segard, Delisa Stroud, and Donna Beed delighted the fans with their action on the court.

As if to satisfy the fans' wish for another national title, the Lady Bulldogs won 34 games and allowed no opponent to defeat them. Loftin expressed his surprise at the women's winning their third national title because they did not have a strong defensive player on the inside. Anita Foster, a key player from previous years, was missed greatly. However, Kelli Litsch helped to turn the season into a winning one. By defeating Saginaw Valley, Michigan, the team wrapped up a great schedule. Loftin reflected that the final game was the most exciting one he had experienced in his years at Southwestern. Litsch, a six-foot senior, was named national tournament "Most Valuable Player" for the third time. Shelly Brown and Litsch were named to the All-Tournament Team. Other departing seniors were Cari Hayes, Jan Cheadle, and Ellisia Fountain.

At that point, the Lady Bulldogs had the most national tournament victories with 11. They also had the most consecutive wins by winning the first seven games in the first three tournament appearances. Kelli Litsch set records with 257 tournament points;

most field goals attempted, 175; most field goals made, 102; most free throws, 53; most free throws attempted, 65; and most rebounds, 110.

As the excitement of another crown faded over the summer, Coach Loftin faced a new team without the direct talent of Litsch. Instead, she would work beside him as assistant coach. Yes, 1985-1986 was the year to build and to find strong replacements for the May graduates. Although the success of the Ladies was not as remarkable as previous seasons, they were conference champions with a 20-0 record.

The team roster included Shelly Brown and Sandra Smith, who were the leading rebounders in the conference. Marilu Dunard, Renvy Evans, Lisa Freeman, and Dena Phelps handled the ball with quickness and accuracy. Others wearing the Bulldog white and blue were Terri Prim, Dawn Brooks, Lisa Segard, Demetris Beachamp, Dane Ferguson, Donna Beed, and Delisa Stroud. Of course, Donna Douglas also served as an important leader on the team.

By season's end, the staff planned for more new faces on the team. In general, the recruiting methods of the Southwestern coaching staff involve watching AAU games in Norman during the summer; watching high-school girls playing in the Western Oklahoma area; and making many telephone calls for prospective out-of-state athletes.

Recruiting for the new season was successful. Headlines in the DAILY OKLAHOMAN sports section on March 18, 1987, read: "Southwestern Adds Fourth Crown." An opening suggestion remarked that maybe the NAIA national tournament should be renamed the "Southwestern Oklahoma State Invitational." Even though the comment may have had a casual tone, Coach Loftin savored the championship more than any other because women's basketball had improved all over the nation since he had begun coaching; competition was tougher than ever.

A leader of the 1986-1987 squad included forward Joyce Boudreaux, who made a final basket to give the Lady Bulldogs a 60-58 win over North Georgia in Kansas City. Another teammate was Rhonda Smith, who was named District Nine's "Player of the Year." Both Rhonda and Joyce were chosen for the National All-Tournament team, while Donna Douglas of Tuttle



made the All-Tournament second team. Others sharing the team spirit included Peaches Brown, Stephanie Davis, Dena Phelps, Amelia Green, Trainer Billy Eggers, Sandra Smith, Tracie Wynn, Sherri Suggs, Tanya Andrews, Michelle Denton, student coach Jason Maxwell, and manager Donna Brence. The women finished the season with 21 consecutive wins and a 30-2 record.

Cheers were loud as the team displayed its fourth "NAIA National Champions" banner. They were welcomed home in Weatherford by several hundred fans, and Coach Loftin was lauded for his amazing record (179-16) since his 1981 start at Southwestern.

How can young women from different backgrounds and states play together so well to continue this spirited winning tradition? They like their coach, even though he is tough and tries "to keep them straight." He says the women share two characteristics as players--coming from winning programs and having winning attitudes.

In Loftin's efforts to guide the Lady Blues, several noteworthy accomplishments have been made. A few should

be mentioned. Kelli Litsch is the only athlete in NAIA history, man or woman, to be named a four-time All-American in any sport. In addition to Kelli, Chelly Belanger, Anita Foster, and Shelly Brown were named NAIA All-Americans. Numerous free-throw and field-goal records are held by Litsch, both locally and nationally. Some of the women have also played in special honor games.

Is there life after being a Lady Bulldog? The closeness of the team players does not diminish with graduation from Southwestern; in fact, it is not unusual to see some of the former teammates eating pizza together or enjoying a game of tennis. Although they are geographically scattered, they keep in touch. Just what are these past champions doing? Kelli Litsch is still assistant coach with the Lady Bulldogs. Cari Hayes assists with coaching at East Central. Susan Mounts coaches at Plainview, Texas, while Thel Shelby and Deana English both coach at Duncan. Chelly Belanger is a veterinarian in Dallas. Anita Foster works in a Dallas post office. Mary Champion

continues her coaching duties, and Marilu Dunard coaches in Wichita Falls, Texas. Coach Loftin remarks that seventy percent of the players on the championship teams have graduated from college. That in itself is commendable.

Will the dazzling Southwestern tradition continue? The fans think so. Although they see the future as producing improved teams at East Central of Ada, Northwestern of Alva, Oklahoma City's Oklahoma Christian College, and Shawnee's Oklahoma Baptist University, most predictions say that the Lady Bulldogs are still the team to beat. With their astounding record and brilliant coaching, the Southwestern team has helped to develop women's basketball into top-quality competition for both players and spectators.

Because of that spark of competition and success on the basketball court, people forget temporarily the declining economy and troubles of Western Oklahoma. They realize that competitive excitement is still possible.

Thanks, Lady Bulldogs, for sharing that special Southwestern spirit! ■

the people, yes

## Okies

By Margie Snowden North

THOSE CALIFORNIANS SPAT OUT THE WORD  
AS THOUGH IT WERE SOUR GREEN APPLES.  
GO BACK WHERE YOU CAME FROM, THEY SAID.  
FRUIT TRAMPS. OKIES.

BUT WE PICKED THEIR PEAS IN BUSHEL BASKETS  
AND THEIR FRUIT IN CRATES  
AND WORKED IN THEIR CANNERIES  
AND BUILT THEIR HIGHWAYS.  
OKIES DID ALL THAT  
AND WE DIDN'T NEED A THANK-YOU  
NOR A SMILE,  
BUT A PAYCHECK THAT BOUGHT A CAR  
AND BUILT A TRAILER HOUSE  
AND GOT GAS WITH SOME LEFT OVER  
SO WE COULD GET BACK TO WESTERN OKLAHOMA  
WHERE WE WANTED TO BE  
IN THE FIRST PLACE.

*of sky and trees*

## Watcher

By Margie Snowden North

Autumn sunlight flashes,  
plays on car windows  
Tires hum on concrete  
going somewhere,  
places unattainable  
to the watcher in the field.  
Cotton rows beckon  
Cotton sack awaits

The watcher bends over his work,  
resolute  
Duty and the cotton sack weigh heavily  
pull him back  
from places out there.

# The Challenging 5's To 50's-- And Politics

By Opal Hartsell Brown

**BACKGROUND NOTES:** Youth today *can* go to college if they are determined to do so. This article, Chapter 3 from a book-length manuscript titled *THE CHALLENGING 5'S TO 50'S--AND POLITICS*, tells how the writer did that during the "Great Depression" and Dust Bowler era when there were no GI bills or government loans for students.

Having lost her job during a political upheaval, she and many others found jobs impossible to get, so she went back to college to finish her degree. Many students experienced that same poverty.

Four chapters of this manuscript have already been published.

**THE STORY: CHAPTER 3:** I had enough money saved in 1930-1931 to attend summer school and hoped to find another job. As often as I could get transportation, I scouted school boards and superintendents on weekends, but the answer was always the same.

"You must be the tenth or eleventh here this week. We have no vacancies and don't expect any."

I heard of an opening in a small town in the southern part of the state and hastened to apply. When I introduced myself to a board member, he was polite and then asked, "Are you a member of the church?" (denomination excluded in respect to those of that faith who did not approve of such tactics)

"No," I answered.

"Then you don't have a chance," he said and gazed at the ground.

I stared at him in disbelief. He sighed and looked up.

"I don't approve of that," he said, but the other two can outvote me."

"I've heard of teachers having to 'stroke the palms' of certain board members in order to get a job," I fired, "but this is the first time I've heard of rejections among different Protestant churches. I realize there is prejudice against Catholics, but Protestants, no!"

"I don't approve of that," the man said, "but that's the way it is. I'm sorry."

Bewildered, I stared at him a moment and then walked away. Back in the borrowed car, my mind whirled like a windmill in March. How could anyone do that? It was preposterous. Cruel!

Then like a slow change in the wind's direction, I wondered what was the difference in that board's attitude and the one at Seminole. One's actions seemed to be based on political prestige, the other on religious fulfillment. People with jobs usually contributed to the church and, like everything else, churches depended on contributions. Or assessments.

Times were pressing for everybody, including my dear parents. The depression had cost them their home in Sulphur, and drought was threatening to uproot them as renters.

Monday afternoon, I went to the dean of women. She had a long list of students looking for teaching positions or part-time work, but nothing to offer. "I don't even have a boarding house," she said, "where students can work for their meals." All I can do is keep your name on the list and hope for a miracle."

Then I went to the Administration Building to check the bulletin board. The only thing was a request from Gladys Gilstrap for a roommate for the fall term. Hurrah! Maybe we could suffer together. She was another teacher axed from the Seminole faculty.

Gladys had already rented a one-room, rawhide cabin for the fall term. It was in the back of a garden next to the alley. Bath and toilet were in the boarding house up front, but we could accept that. Rent was only \$5.00 a month. I could pay my fall enrollment and first \$2.50. After that? A curtain fell over the answer.

Gladys had a loan of \$12.00 a month from a women's club in Ardmore, her hometown. That was enough to pay her rent, buy supplies for her Business

Education major, and purchase a little food.

My fiancé, Gordon Brown, of Seminole drove me home, where I worked until the fall term began. When he came to take me back to school, Mother and Dad loaded the car with vegetables, home-canned food, and eggs. They shared their basics: sugar, coffee, salt, flour; their linens, dishes, and coins. I was ready to set up housekeeping with Gladys.

We brightened the cabin with a chenille bedspread, frayed towels for curtains, and a Mexican scarf on the kerosene lamp table. We tossed a rag rug on the linoleum and called it "Persia." An old granite stew pan from the alley served as a night chamber.

We had no radio, record player, or telephone, and the only place we went on week nights was to the library to study. I had a Spanish text, but the rest of my lessons I studied wherever I could find books.

Occasionally, I went to a football game in the afternoon, primarily to watch "Dad" Fentem lead the band. Even though he said in sociology class he couldn't play an instrument, he could get more music from the band than any instructor I ever saw.

"I sing," he added, "with my sons. We have a quartet, and I'll take a music test with anybody." He was an excellent professor in social studies also and a friend to students.

There were days when Gladys and I had nothing for breakfast, except canned peaches I had brought from home. We fasted at lunch and scrounged in the evening. She bought crackers, and we made soup with shriveled potatoes, onions, and canned tomatoes. A couple of times, we filched carrots from the landlady's garden to enrich the soup and called it "caviar."

The spare minutes I had, I worked on a short story. When it was finished, I sent it to the editor of the *DAILY OKLAHOMAN*. He didn't use fiction,

but he offered me a job as stringer for college news. I seized it with gusto.

My courses in journalism with Ben Morrison had helped me to watch everywhere I went for news items. Not only did I make enough to pay my \$2.50 a month, but I got to interview the president, Dr. A. Linscheid, every week.

Sitting across the desk from him was like living a poem or a proverb. The epitome of grace and wisdom, he could weave the simplest topics into profundity. Sometimes I felt guilty for lingering too long in his office, but he never seemed impatient.

Gorden took me home Thanksgiving, and we brought back another load of home-grown food. That included pecans and eggs, some of which I sold and traded for such essentials as pens and paper. With the things Gladys could buy, we had enough to last until Christmas and mid-term. She graduated and went home at that time.

My next roommate was an intermarried relative, Eva Barbee, from Seminole. Like the rest of us, she had to survive on a thread and a prayer. Our landlady got new boarders--men working on a highline--and asked me to help serve meals for my lunch. That was help beyond measure, until the men moved to another job.

By the summer term, I was in dire circumstances. I was to graduate in July, but I had no money to enroll. My job as a stringer brought in barely enough to pay rent, and other jobs were non-existent. Determined not to drop out, I waded into the unknown, attending classes every day for two weeks. Then Dad sold some steers and sent me \$10. I hastened to the Registrar's

Office.

"You're too late," he said. "School has been in session two weeks already."

"I know," I answered. "I've been in classes every day."

The registrar stared at me, blinked, and then asked, "Why didn't you enroll before now?"

"I didn't have the money," I answered, "until today. Here it is."

His gaze was questioning. Uncertain.

"I'm to graduate in July," I said, "and I have to go on. I've sacrificed too much to miss it now." I had to clench my teeth to keep from erupting into tears.

"Why didn't you come to talk to me about it?" he asked. "We could have made some kind of arrangements for you."

"I didn't know you would do that," I said, "and besides I was embarrassed. I still..." I clinched my teeth again.

"If you will get a signed statement from each teacher," he said, "that you have been in class all this time, I'll enroll you."

I bounced out of there, got the signatures--some with difficulty--and hurried back to the office. The registrar enrolled me, wished me luck, and I sailed on through the term.

July 21, graduation day, Dr. Linscheid's presence on the stage lifted me from a billboard of poverty to a cloud of spiritual wealth. As the college orchestra played "Coronation March," I tripped down the aisle with several dozen more candidates for degrees, oblivious of straight hair, faded blue blouse, and dingy pleated skirt.

My gray cap and gown became a robe and a crown. My frazzled canvas sandals, pasted down with white shoe

polish, turned into glass slippers. Dr. Linscheid's speech, woven around "The Village Blacksmith," was a nit of coal, pressed into a diamond.

"It is a greater psalm of life," he said, "than Longfellow's classic by that title." Phrase after phrase, he pointed out the blacksmith's strength of body, mind, and character.

"The blacksmith was a hard worker," Linscheid said. "He loved children who stopped after school to watch him. He set the right example before his family. Instead of sending them to church, as some fathers do, he took them and sat among his boys..."

My degree, presented by W. B. Morrison, was a passport to success and happiness ever after, but only for the moment.

I became a housekeeper for my Uncle Mace and family, who had moved to my hometown. The salary of \$3.00 a week, room and board, was the same. I had made as a waitress the summer after graduating from high school.

But these were depression and dust bowl days. I was fortunate and grateful to earn that much. Thousands of homeless people roamed the country, frequenting soup lines. Others with homes had to sign up for free flour.

I was still young, and things would get better someday. ■

*OPAL HARTSELL BROWN, now of rural Davis, has been a moving force among Oklahoma writers for many years and a valued contributor to WESTVIEW since 1981.*

## WESTVIEW PATRONS

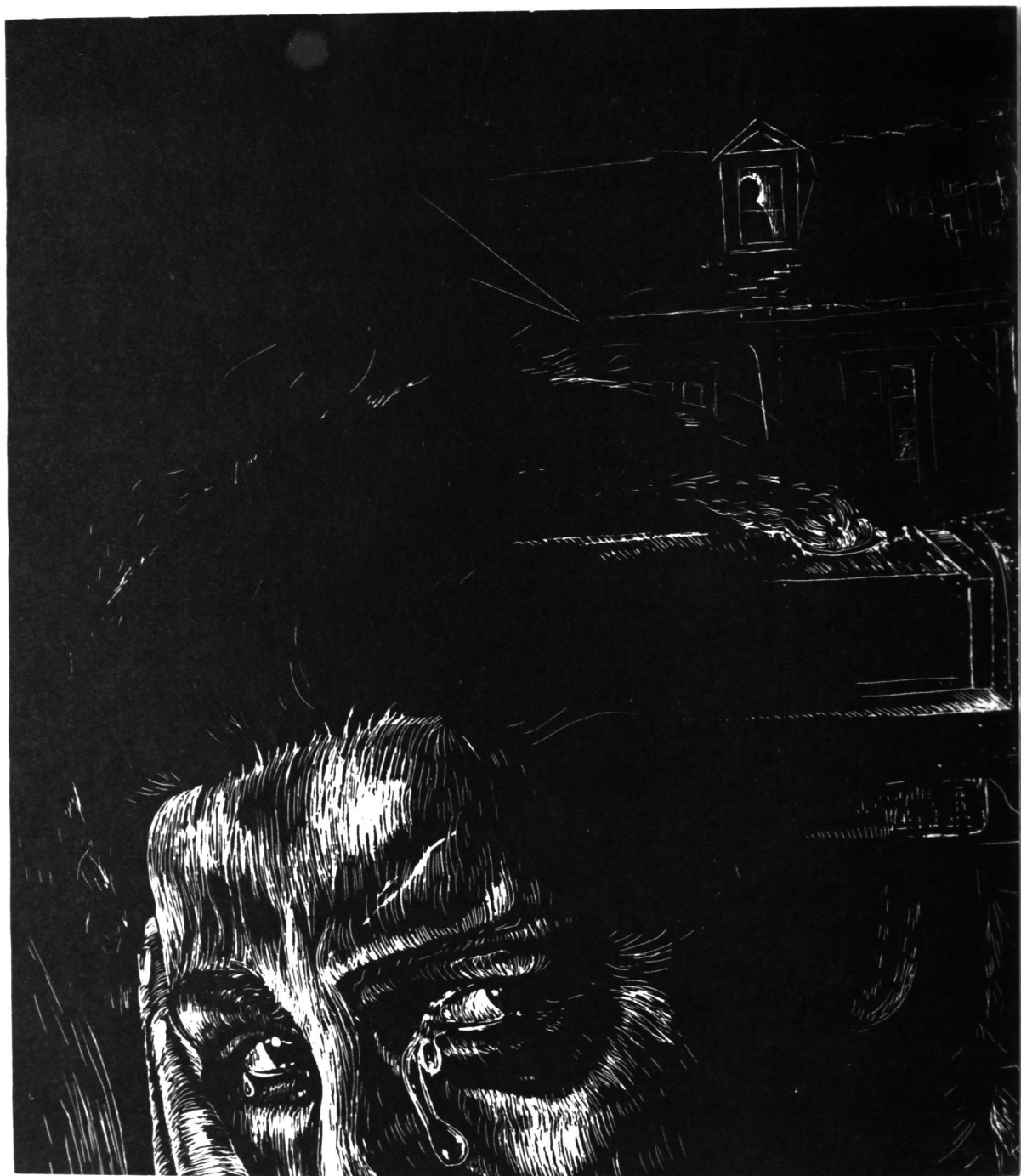
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The cold, bitter wind whistled through the lifeless old house. Outside, the leaves were thrown about like worthless pieces of trash as two kids, a boy and a girl, passed by. They were poorly dressed in dull, shapeless coats that barely protected them from the harsh winter. They walked rapidly, almost running, because they were eager to get to their warm, cozy house where Mother would cuddle them and lead them to the fireplace. "My poor, poor babies," she would croon. Then, like most mothers, she would give them plenty of tender, loving care.

Mira heard them as they walked by, and she inched herself closer to the wall, thinking that they could see her. In her fear, she had squeezed her eyes shut, but now she opened them and glanced around her with a vacant, empty stare. The room she was in, which once had been a bedroom, was now void of any furniture except for a cracked, yellowish mirror and a green, faded sofa. The carpeting had been torn off the floor so all that remained was the naked wood. Mira shivered as another draft of wind penetrated through the abandoned house, and she

slowly got up, realizing that the only way to keep herself warm was by walking. Her steps were slow and noiseless as she made her way from room to room. They all looked the same, but her mind was not paying attention to her surroundings. As she went by the bathroom, she saw herself reflected in the tiny mirror above the destroyed sink. Her eyes, which were red from crying and not sleeping well, still held a shimmering, gossamer beauty. Mira moved closer to inspect one of the bruises her stepfather had given her a few hours ago and discovered



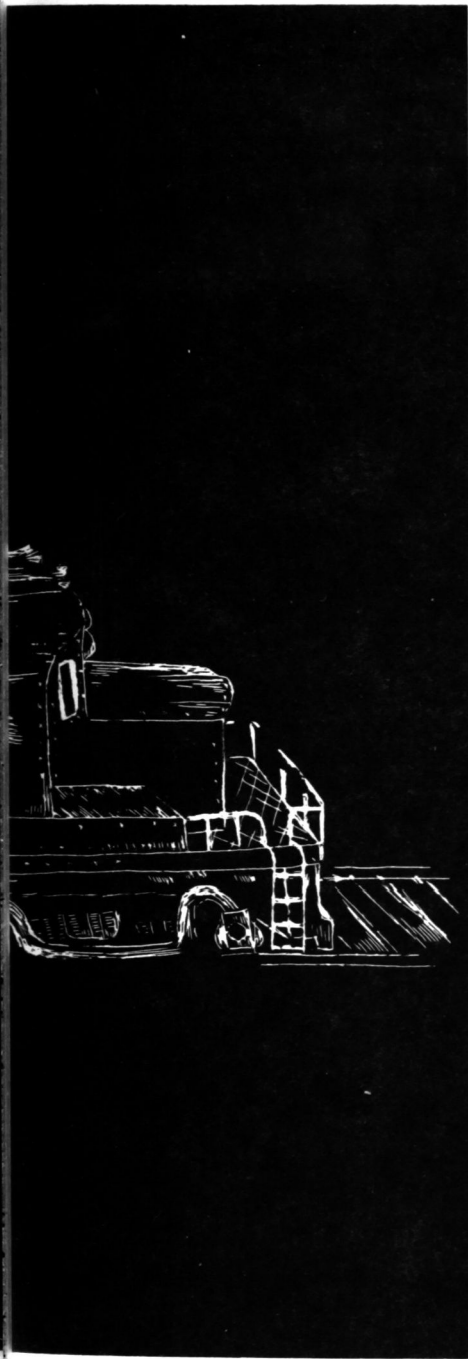


Illustration by Jay Hollopeter

that the swelling in her left eye had gone down, but was still very painful. Her big, lamb-like brown eyes filled with tears again as she remembered how badly and cruelly he had beaten her this time, but one shake of her head and the memories disappeared, at least for a while. "No," she said with clenched teeth, "I won't remember!" Carefully, she examined the rest of her thin, almost anorexic body. Her ribs were not broken, but she labored her breathing because deep breaths immediately sent waves of pain surging through her small frame. Her arms and hands were

bruised from where she had tried to protect her face; but otherwise, she found no broken bones. Without meaning to, the memories rushed upon her again, and she started her body-warming routine again with the same tired steps.

As she walked, she thought about the kids that had gone by earlier. They were going home from school, she supposed. Tiredly, flashes of nagging teachers and school fights came to her. Mira had liked the first day of school, but as the days went by, she had decided that this place was just another reason for girls to dress up in their nicest clothes and for boys to act their coolest. The boys had never tried to impress Mira, for they thought her a skinny, boring girl. Mira hadn't cared about their attitudes. All she wanted was to be left alone, and she had been. All through elementary school and junior high, she had been a loner. She remembered that in her freshman year of high school all the girls had been excited about having boyfriends. Mira's own unawakenedness yearned to be satisfied; so for the first time, she longed for a friend she could talk with. None of her classmates, however, wished to be seen with her; so Mira had looked somewhere else for companionship. It had been wrong, she knew, but soon she was seen with the outcasts of the school--tough, foul-mouthed kids who came to school to pick fights and get expelled. Mira had quickly adapted to their ways. For her first fight, she had cleanly knocked out Betsy, one of the most popular girls in school because the saucy girl had "suggested" that Mira change her clothes at least once a week. "I don't know just how in the world you can stand to wear the same old baggy jeans every day," the girl had commented with a flick of her picture-perfect permed hair. Mira had learned that the best way to irritate people was to smile at them, so she had given Betsy a sunny grin. The girl's mouth quickly dropped open and after a few seconds of stunned silence, she had screamed, "White trash like you shouldn't be allowed to walk the streets!" That was all the provocation Mira had needed. With a swift turn of her clenched fist, she had socked the offender square in the eye. The poor blonde never saw it coming.

Later, sitting in the principal's office, Mira only half-heard his accusa-

tions. He had called her a troublemaker a few times, and then had sent her home for a week to "think about what she had done."

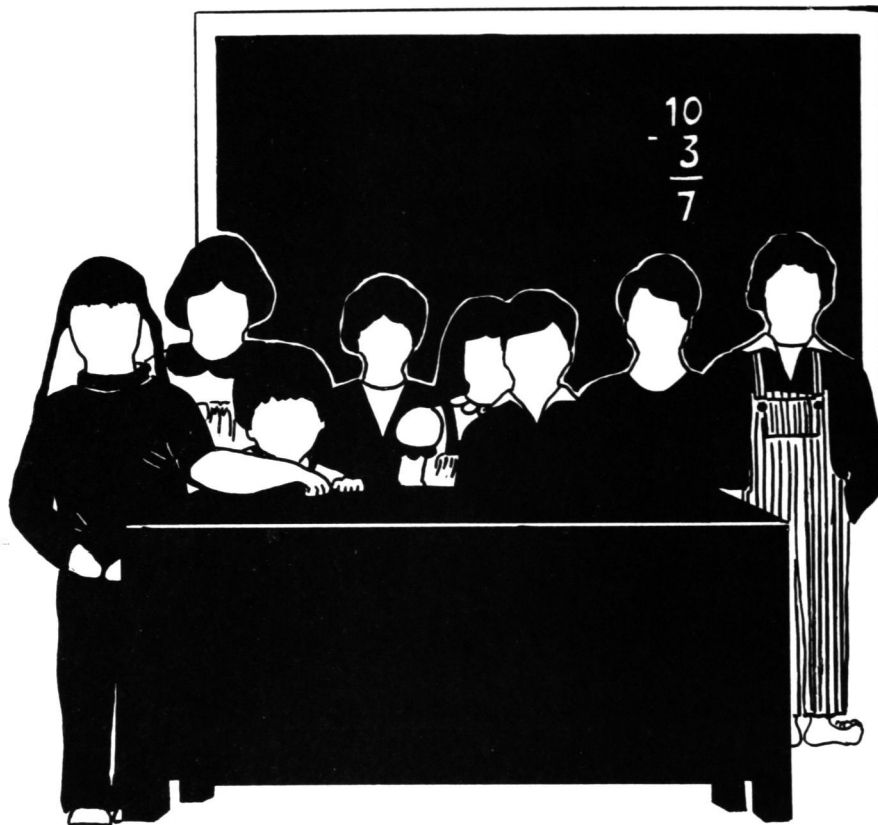
Home. Mira's thoughts took a different route. Her mother, once a beautiful, happy woman, was now an abused, beaten wife. Her second husband, the man whom she had once thought of as a loving, caring person, had turned into a cruel, sadistic man. He enjoyed beating her until she lay at his feet unconscious. Soon, however, he had tired of beating the same body, so he had turned to his five step-children. All of them were older than Mira, and soon they had all left home. One day, her older sister, Teresa, had come to take her mother away. "Mother, please come with me," she had begged. But her mother quietly refused. "I can't leave him," she had whispered. "Who would take care of him?" Teresa had wept and begged, but the determined woman hadn't changed her mind. "But why, Mother?" Mira had asked. Her mother had only stared at some invisible object on the floor, and Mira had run from the room, angry. When James had come home that night, drunker than usual, he had been in an unusually good mood. "How is my princess today?" he had asked his wife while patting her on the head like some pet. He went on talking sweetly to both of them, acting like the caring, understanding man he wasn't. His attitude puzzled Mira, but she was on her guard. The problem began during dinner when Mira accidentally knocked over the salt shaker. James jokingly but cruelly taunted her. "What's the matter, girl? You've got the grace of an elephant!" Mira managed a tremulous smile, but she sensed the calm before the storm. After supper, she washed the dishes and tried to sneak to her room, but she hadn't made it to the hallway before she heard him call "Mira, bring me a beer, will you honey?" She took him the beer; but when she turned to leave, he suddenly grabbed her by the wrist and with a flick of his hand sent her sprawling across the room. "So, you want to get away from me, do you?" he said in a slow, menacing voice.

"No... I... yes! I think you're a drunk, useless bum! Get out of here and let us lead a normal life!" Mira had screamed. James had been surprised by her reply, and his few moments of hesitation gave Mira a head start for the door. Just

(Continued on page 39)

# A SURPRISE FOR MAMA

By Inez Schneider Whitney



*Illustration by Valerie Caulkins Graybill*

The year was 1913. I was in Second Grade at Prairie View, a one-room country school near Custer City, Oklahoma. One afternoon just before dismissal, Mr. Garlow, the teacher, knocked on his desk with a ruler.

"Attention, pupils! I'm planning a program for your parents. You will all participate. I have your parts here." He proceeded to pass out slips of paper to all of us and then said, "Memorize your verse tonight. We will start practicing tomorrow."

I couldn't get home fast enough. "Look, Mama," I said as I ran into the house. "I get to speak a piece on a program. Here it is. I'm going to tell about helping Grandma find her glasses."

Mama prided herself that she had

been very proficient in giving recitations in the little Indiana community where she had lived before she came to Oklahoma. She pasted favorite clippings she saved into a scrapbook, most of them poems. She also had a book titled *THE IDEAL ORATOR AND MANUAL OF ELOCUTION*. It had many pictures showing what gestures to use for surprise, grief, meditation, and many others. It was published in 1897, and I still have it.

After quite a search, Mama said, "Here's a recitation that's much better, and it's humorous too. That's what people like."

The next morning, I took the verse to school: I handed it to Mr. Garlow and said, "My mama wants me to say this. She says it's better than the piece you

gave me."

As he read it, a puzzled look came over his face. "Are you sure your mother wants you to use this?"

"Oh yes! And I know it already!"

He shrugged his shoulders and said, "All right."

The night of the program came. Every seat was taken, and many people were standing in the back and along the sides. Each parent eagerly awaited the performance of his offspring.

Finally it was my turn. I was one of eight children who climbed up on a long recitation bench. This made us high enough to be seen by the audience. When we were finally in a straight line, we began. Each one except me recited a verse telling what he did to help Grandma. I was last, and my verse was different. I don't remember all of it, but I do remember these lines:

"Pa, where do the holes in doughnuts go?"

"My pa kept answering 'I dunno.'"

As I finished, there was loud laughter. I thought to myself, "They must have liked mine best."

When the program ended, Mama grabbed me by the hand and said to Papa, "Get the buggy around here in a hurry."

He looked surprised. "Don't you want to visit a little? We always do."

"Not tonight!"

As we waited outside for Papa to come, Mama said, "Inez, I was never so embarrassed. Why didn't you tell me you were in an exercise with other children and everyone was telling what he could do to help Grandma?"

I don't remember what I said, but I suppose like Pa in the recitation, I just answered, "I dunno." ■

*INEZ SCHNEIDER WHITNEY, no stranger to regular WESTVIEW readers, once again shares an interesting frontier Western Oklahoma anecdote.*

# Champions

By Bonnie Timms

Through all the years I was in school at Hammon, the community had considered basketball a sport just for fun. When I became a sophomore, the attitude of the town began to change. Everyone realized our boys' basketball team could be great if only it had a little support. For the next three years, the boys' team **was** great, and the boys had many qualities that helped them achieve success.

No one can deny that the boys on the team had tremendous talent. Never again will five boys come together to play on the same team as they did the last two years I was in high school. All five had great shooting ability; and although not all of them achieved great dribbling ability, there were enough who could dribble well to fill the void. We have a small Class B school, which made absolutely no difference to the boys. The way they played those big schools would have convinced anyone that our school was the biggest in Oklahoma. In size it wasn't, but in spirit it definitely was. Although talent played a definite role in the team's success, without the players' inner qualities they would never have made it.

The five starters on the team--Steven and Kevin Walker, Jeff Morton, Chad Newcomb, and Ricky (Bull) Candy--were all very good friends of mine. I grew up with the latter three. I often went to see them after school, and I always knew where to find them. They were in the gym everyday. Often on weekends when I wanted to go out, they were more than happy to scrimmage one another or a nearby bunch of boys. They were friends, and they were dedicated to one another

and to themselves. Without this dedication, their many fans would have soon quit supporting them. After all, who wants to follow a team if the members don't want to practice and make themselves better? Even after high school, all of them are attending college. Four of the five are rooming together and attending Southwestern.

The boys liked to brag about how much talent they had and about how outstanding they were, but I knew that they never would have become winners if they hadn't had such an incredible desire to win. That desire was evident when after two hours of practice they got on the line to run suicides and still gave it their all. It would have been easy just to lag behind in what resembled a jog as the other boys did, but those five pushed on. In the two games they lost the last year, I have seen them kick and fight with everything they had, and I have seen tears in their eyes when there was nothing to do but shake hands, get dressed, and get on the bus for home. It took so much for them to go through that, but the next game they got out there and did it all over again but walked off with a smile of victory.

The year 1984 was a great one because Hammon started to come out of its shell, but it couldn't compare with the 1985-1986 back-to-back state championships our boys received. Those five boys had rare qualities; and their efforts and successes will never be forgotten by their families, friends, and fans.■

*BONNIE TIMMS is a sophomore English major at SOSU fom Hammon.*

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# The Days of Lucien Volney Rector

By J. Ruth Farrar

Lucien Volney Rector was born in Brazil, Indiana, on September 21, 1868, the son of a Union Veteran of the Civil War, Benjamin VanCleve Rector, and Elizabeth Shattuck Rector. (The Shattuck family history, *MEMORIALS OF THE DESCENDANTS OF WILLIAM SHATTUCK*, was published in Boston in 1855.)

Helen May Duffy Rector was born March 22, 1877, at Fowler, Indiana, the eldest child of Michael and Jeannette Templeton Duffy, farmers and cattlemen. May's mother died when she was 17 and a senior in high school, so it was necessary for May to stay home to provide for several younger brothers and sisters. Her school awarded her an honorary certificate of completion since she had always earned high grades.

Lucien V. Rector attended Indiana State Normal School, Terre Haute, under difficult financial conditions. He transferred to Depauw University School of Theology, Greencastle, Indiana, and earned a Doctor of Divinity Degree and a teaching certificate. He became a pastor of Methodist churches in Indiana, serving seven years.

In 1901, Rector decided to come to Oklahoma Territory. The 33-year-old bachelor arrived in Weatherford, still the end of the Choctaw Railroad, having made the long journey in a boxcar with his mare, Molly, a tent, hay, and a basic survival gear. He found a relinquished claim in the Chapel Hill School District eleven miles west and two miles south of Weatherford or seven miles southeast of the present location of Clinton, which hadn't been founded yet. Chapel Hill needed a minister and a teacher, so

Rector occupied his claim and began to "prove it up." He lived in his tent until, with the help of George Giles and other neighbors, he was able to build a two-story house with dirt floor.

Rector returned to Fowler, Indiana, in September of 1902 to marry Helen May Duffy on 9-17-02. Even though May's father, Michael Duffy, liked Rector, he certainly didn't like losing his eldest daughter, who had been "mothering" his children, managing his household, and helping him with his farms, cattle, and elevators. Worst of all, he was fearful of her going to that "Wild Oklahoma Territory." Despite objections, Rev. and Mrs. Rector returned by train to their new home at Chapel Hill, as it was time for school to begin, and the first Chapel Hill one-room school building had to be finished.

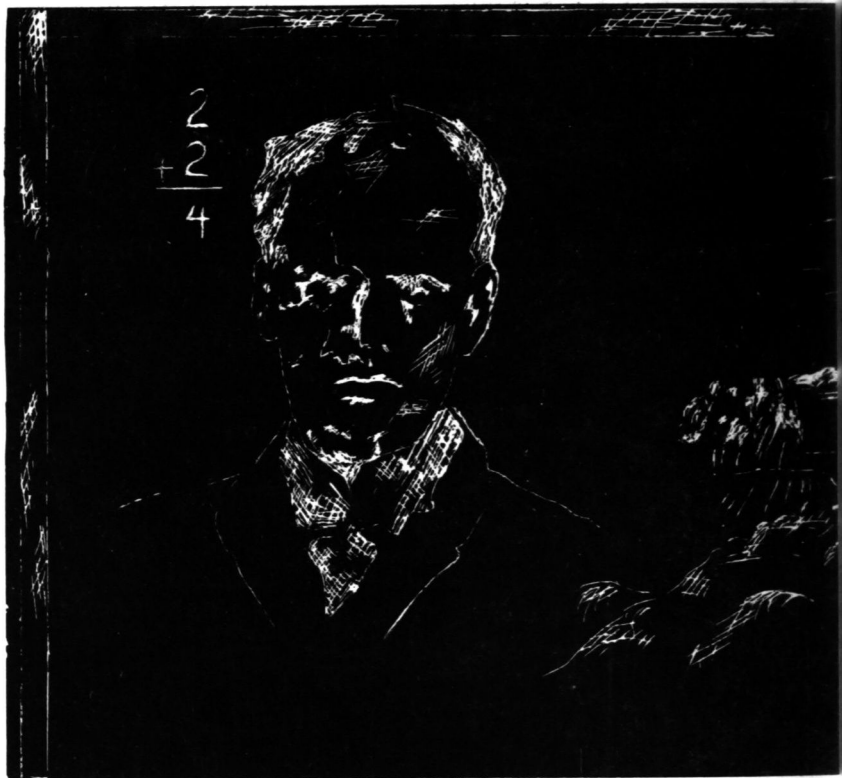
Mrs. Rector was a musician, and her pump organ was shipped by her family to the railroad station in Weatherford. Lucien went to Weatherford, loaded the organ on a wagon, and started home on the rough trail. On a steep bank of Little Deer Creek, the wagon overturned, dislodging the organ. Lucien couldn't reload the heavy organ alone. After a while, two young men on horseback offered their services—at a price! They would help, they said, only if they could borrow the organ that night for a neighborhood dance. This was quite a dilemma for a Methodist

minister, who strongly opposed dancing. Since he was given no choice, they delivered the organ to the young men's family home and Rector went home empty-handed, wondering if his new bride would ever see her organ again. Fortunately, a few days later the young men brought the organ to their home intact.

Rector helped to complete the building of the Chapel Hill District School in late 1902 and became its first teacher at a salary of \$35 a month. He conducted church services in the school building until the Chapel Hill Methodist Church was built. The Rectors held prayer services and sing-meets in their home with Lucien leading the singing and Mrs. Rector serving as organist. Their home was the setting for many marriages involving early-day families.

Good friends of the Rectors were Dr. C. H. and Mrs. Laressa Cox McBurney. Mr. McBurney taught in the nearby Lone Star rural school and later became a medical doctor in Clinton; his wife published poetry and biographies. Another good friend was Thomas J. Mabry, who taught at the neighboring Prairie View School and later became Governor of New Mexico.

Rev. Rector "supplied" in many early-day Methodist churches and continued to do so all his life in Western Oklahoma. Mrs. Rector served as organist and taught Bible classes







several years. One of the early-day churches was at Parkersburg (nothing remains today except the cemetery), a booming railroad town, which had eleven saloons and not one church building. Rector taught school here beginning in 1906 and held church services in the schoolhouse. He traveled by horse and buggy eight miles morning and afternoon, fording the Washita River at Rocky Crossing. When the Washita flooded, he had to leave his horse and buggy at the railroad bridge across the Washita and walk the rest of the way to Parkersburg.

While living at Chapel Hill, the Rectors had three children, all born at home in Oklahoma Territory (all of whom survive). They are Ruth Farrar, retired public-school teacher formerly of Weatherford, now of Yukon; Miriam Fly, retired piano teacher of Fort Collins, Colorado; and John Duffy Rector, farmer and electrician of Hammon.

In 1903, Lucien's mother, Elizabeth Shattuck Rector, came by train from Indiana to see her newborn grandchild, Ruth. She was intent on making her visit a surprise. She arrived in Clinton late at night and hired a hack to take her to her son's farm home. On arrival, she knocked on the door and Lucien called out, "Who's there?" There was no answer as Elizabeth had a hearing problem. Again, Lucien called out, and

again there was no response. Since there were still outlaws and horse thieves riding the countryside, Lucien took his gun and was prepared to fire when he called out the third time. "Who's there?" and his mother answered for the first time. It was a very shaken son who welcomed her into his home.

Lucien's father, sixty-five-year-old Benjamin VanCleve Rector, made a rather spectacular journey in 1909 to visit his three grandchildren after his wife had died. He had an opportunity to see land the Atchison-Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad was promoting in the Texas Panhandle by going on a special train from Chicago to the Texas Panhandle. He decided not to buy the land, but did decide he wanted to see the Alamo. He set out afoot and walked over seven hundred miles to San Antonio to visit the Alamo, birthplace of the Texas Republic. The area was very sparsely settled, and he spent most of his nights under an open sky. After completing his visit to San Antonio, he again walked over seven hundred miles to Lucien's home for his family visit. It is believed that he returned home to Indiana by train from Clinton.

Even though the Rectors had "proved up" their small acreage in the Chapel Hill School District, the land was poor and unproductive. In late 1909, Rector found rich land for sale in the Quartermaster Creek-Washita River Valley,

seven miles northeast of Hammon, and took possession of it on January 1, 1910. He purchased the first quarter-section from Red Bird, Indian widow of Spotted Horse, and her daughter, Mary Walking Woman, and son, Roman Nose. He also leased eighty acres of Indian land on the Washita River, known as the Spotted Horse Picnic Grounds. (Later he purchased additional acres to the west of Quartermaster School District. The Charles Whiteskunk family lived across the creek to the east of the Rectors. The Rectors had a very "good neighbor" relationship with the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian families and welcomed them to use the Spotted Horse Picnic Grounds for family reunions, fishing, swimming, and pow-wows. Some of their good friends were Red Bird's family, the Whiteskunks, Chief White Shield, the Fred Standing Waters, the Roman Noses, the Howling Waters, and the Homer Harts.

Rector started building a small three-room house on the new farm in 1910, hauling the building materials from the Clinton railroad station. He moved his family and cattle to their new home in 1911 in time for the children to enroll in the Quartermaster School fall session. Later on, Ruth was sent into Hammon for her eighth and ninth years to board and room with the Rev. H. J. Kliever family, early-day

Mennonite missionaries to the Cheyenne-Arapaho Indians. The Klievers spoke German in the home part of the time, so Ruth enrolled in German I in the Hammon High School. She went to church with the Klievers on Sundays and sang hymns in Cheyenne with the Indians. When the children became 15, 13, and 11 years of age, they drove a Model T Ford to the Hammon Schools.

Through the years, the Rectors developed the land, built a large concrete in-ground silo, planted an orchard, and cultivated a large irrigated garden. They added six rooms to the original three-room house, plus a three-room concrete basement, laid with copper tubing to bring running water into the house from the cistern below the basement. When their son, John, returned home from his studies at Coyne Electrical Institute in Chicago, he wired the house for electricity, and they purchased a 32-volt generator. He also built a wind charger, providing an additional six volts. Their farmhouse was one of the first in Western Oklahoma to have running water, a modern bathroom, electric iron, and toaster. The concrete cellar was used for a tornado shelter, and for the storage of fresh and canned vegetables, fruits, meat, and eggs. They cured their own hams and raised their own bees, furnishing all friends and neighbors with free honey.

The Rectors were progressive thinkers—many years ahead of their time. They were proponents of the women's vote and firmly believed that all individuals—regardless of nationality, color, gender, or religion—should be allowed equal opportunity in all pursuits of life. They were disturbed and angry to find it necessary to give protection to their Black hired hands, a couple who were the only permanent Black residents of the area for several years. They were also distressed to find that their granddaughters would not be allowed to play basketball, enroll in shop, woodworking, engineering courses, and other studies reserved for boys only. They were avid readers and always encouraged continuing education as the means to a more successful life.

In the horrible Washita River flood on April 4, 1934, the Rector family was involved in the rescue of two neighbors. A neighbor, Claude Parks, came to tell them that the Laurence Taylor home had been washed downriver and that

screams had been heard. The Rectors—along with neighbors K. T. Richardson, Claude Parks, Ed McCall, and Gladys McCall—quickly built a heavy-duty raft of railroad ties, tied together with rope and steel wire. They used the downed telegraph wires to hook onto the raft. John Rector poled his way to the swirling waters of the Washita to rescue Laurence Taylor and his little daughter from one-half of the roof of their house. Mrs. Taylor and another daughter had already been swept to their deaths from the other half. Mr. Taylor was so traumatized by having seen his wife and small daughter go crashing to their deaths that he did not want to be rescued. John had quite a job removing them from the housetop caught in the cottonwood trees—and a worse job was approaching! The raft caught on a submerged hay baler with tangled baling wire while being pulled in. John had to go into the vicious swirling flood waters underneath the raft several times to remove the tangled baling wire holding the raft. His mission was successful; however, seventeen victims died in this flood in the Hammon-Butler area.

On October 11, 1949, 81-year-old Lucien V. Rector celebrated one of the happiest days of his life at the last Chapel Hill school reunion. This story was published in the 10-16-49 SUNDAY OKLAHOMAN and other newspapers. Thirty-five of his students from the 1902-1904 classes attended, with their husbands, wives, children, board members, and neighbors. Rev. Rector was invited to ring the school bell and call the roll for the last time. Rev. and Mrs. Rector were honored with speeches, music, and feasting during the day.

Rev. Rector died at an Elk City hospital in 1955, a few days before his eighty-seventh birthday. He had always enjoyed good health except for blindness in one eye from a childhood accident and near-blindness in his other eye the last few years of his life. Mrs. Rector died in 1957 at age 80 and was buried beside Lucien in Hammon's Red Hill Cemetery. ■

*J. RUTH RECTOR FARRAR, SOSU alumna, is a retired teacher now living at the Spanish Cove Retirement Village in Yukon. This memoir is her second published work in WESTVIEW.*

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a warm scene in cold times

# DOWN AT THE FARM

By Fran Merrill

The snow begins at daybreak  
powdering house and barn and  
meadow--muffling morning sounds  
chilling morning air.  
My very breath is visible  
as I step out into the white cold.

Later, when I come from the barn  
the pine is ermine-clad;  
the cellar is a white frosted cake,  
and my window is etched by the Great Artist.

The snow comes faster now,  
the flakes dancing, swirling,  
circling, searching,  
and finding my uncovered head,  
include me in their avalanche,  
and I'm lost in an alabaster world.

*FRAN MERRILL, a prize-winning poet from Shawnee, is a member of Shawnee Writers and the OWFI.*



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# THE PROMISED LAND

By Lorri Malson

**Author's Note:** This story was written as a tribute to all the hundreds of pioneers who traveled many long, hard roads to settle in and around my hometown, Hammon. It's a combination of many stories told to me by my grandparents and one of my teachers. Most of the details are factual, while some tend to be purely fictional. The main story, however, is centered around William Stinson, a true pioneer, who came to Hammon in 1896 on his journey to find the "Promised Land."

The day was beautiful--early spring, the sun shining high overhead. The trees had just begun to put on new growth, and little weeds were beginning to pop up everywhere. It was a glorious day for a walk, so I struck out for the adjacent field. Walking alone, out there, always seems to bring a kind of peace and solitude over me. It's almost like a high of some kind. Lately, I have felt all the pressures of life building up around me, so I walked even faster than I usually do.

Twenty minutes or more passed, and I finally began to unwind. I began to slow down and wake up to all the beauty around me. I knew all the surroundings so well that I could close my eyes and walk blindly, missing the holes left by the snakes and the old fence posts left unused for over forty years. This was my home land and I loved it. I loved it just as my grandfather had and his father before him.

My great-grandfather grew tired of Texas and decided to move his family northward, up toward the Indian and Oklahoma territories. He had heard stories about the beautiful green pastures and open lands, just waiting for a family like his to move in and settle down on. After much preparation and persuasion, he finally loaded his family up and took off for the promised land. The way was long and hard. A covered wagon loaded to the hilt was slow, and some of the trails were almost nonexistent.

My great-grandfather rode in the head wagon, along with eight of his ten

children. The other two children, aged two and four, rode with my great-grandmother in a buggy, nowadays referred to as a surrey. On the way, they met up with some of Great-grandpa's relatives, who decided they would go along too.

It was now late summer, and the hot July sun was beginning to take its toll on the animals and the families. It had been over a month since they had left home, and my great-grandma was tired and frustrated. She begged my great-grandfather to go back--go back to her beloved Texas, her family, and her friends. He told her it wasn't much farther--he could feel it. Maybe by the middle of the next week, they would find the right spot for their new home.

And find it, they did. Two days had barely passed when they came upon a piece of land that had a small creek running through it. The creeks and rivers were sparse in this western area, and they felt it was a good sign to find this beautiful spot with its own water on it.

After some checking around, my great-grandfather found out that this quarter-section had been "squatted" on but hadn't been filed on. He traced the man and purchased the quarter for a huge sum of \$50 and a red mule. Remember, now, that the year was 1896, and \$50 was a huge amount of money. The mule traded for was also important to them since he had packed many belongings on his back on their trek here. Nevertheless, the trade was made, and they set about to clear out and finish the dugout the man had started.

The dugout was built into the bottom of a small hill on the west side of the creek bank, close, but not too close, to the creek. This was done so that when the spring floods came, a flash flood wouldn't destroy their home. The two-room dugout held little of their belongings, so work was started immediately on a new one, which they finally moved into about two years later.

The children loved it here. They

built swings over the creek and played along the banks. They also explored the nearby caves and visited the adjacent fields where small herds of buffalo once came to wallow. They also spent much time looking after one another and the new baby that had been born since they arrived. There were eleven children now--quite a brood for such a small place.

Great-grandpa slowly began tilling the quarter and farming. He had also brought along two cows and three pigs. They began to join area neighbors and built up a small herd of cows and hogs. Later he was able to buy two more quarter-sections of land and decided to build a real house. Supplies had to be hauled from as far away as 150 miles, and the trip wasn't easy. Not only was the distance great for those days, but they also couldn't haul much lumber at a time. The horses would get so tired coming home that they would have to stop for hours to let them rest. Once the lumber was all hauled in, the work on the new house began. It was to be a fine house, one big enough to hold his expanding family. There were two things that Great-grandmother wanted in her "real" house--windows with glass panes and a big front porch, where all the family could gather in the evenings. Great-grandpa didn't have much trouble with the porch, but finding glass for the windows was a big challenge. Glass was a luxury item and wasn't to be found within at least 250 miles. Therefore, he set out for Jack County, Texas, in search of glass. He finally found his precious glass and started back.

The new house was finally finished, and the glass panes were installed. The house had a total of fifteen rooms--quite a mansion in those days. The ground floor contained the kitchen, family room, sitting room, and four bedrooms. The upstairs contained all bedrooms, none of which, of course, had bathrooms. In those days, the great outdoors provided a hand pump and an outhouse for any baths and business. In the winter, water was carried in, heated,



and poured into a huge washtub in the kitchen. Each family member bathed in the washtub.

The times for the most part were good. The lives of these pioneers weren't easy, compared with our lives today. The men and young boys spent long hours outdoors working the land, clearing trees, and hauling water. The women and young girls didn't have easy lives either. They worked outdoors at the creek and spent long hours gardening and canning food for the winter ahead. A difficult childbirth claimed my great-grandmother's life at the early age of 39. She died giving birth to her twelfth child, my grandfather. The older children pitched in to rear the younger children, and life once again fell into place.

One by one the children began to mature. Many years passed, and all but my grandfather left for "greener pastures" as they referred to leaving home. But not Grandpa. He loved the "home place," as he so lovingly called it, and continued to carry on in the ways set forth by his father. Grandpa married and reared two children of his own, and they too learned to love the land.

Grandpa passed this love on down to me, and now as I continue on my walk, I see the old house, the house he was born in over eighty years ago. It's crumbling in places, and the chimney has fallen in. The windows no longer contain any of the glass that Great-grandmother had wanted so badly. But it's still standing, tired and old, a constant reminder of those olden days.

The creek which once provided water for the family and animals now stands dry most of the time. The buffalo wallow is still there, and my dad and brothers find that no matter how hard they try, the wheat won't grow in that spot.

Yes, this is the "promised land" that my great-grandfather was searching for. It has seen both death and new life; it has seen a small family of fourteen grow into a family of well over five hundred. But most important, I have seen it and loved this land--my love and my heritage.

The sun is beginning to set. I glance around quickly once more as I turn and begin my walk toward home feeling loved, refreshed, and full of pride. ■

*LORRI MALSON is a third-year Elementary Education student at SOSU. Her hobbies include writing and reading fiction.*



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# Western Oklahoma Exodus

(first appeared in the SENTINEL LEADER--December 11, 1986)

By Ruth Tittle

There's an old saying that history repeats itself. The exodus of Oklahomans in search of a more prosperous part of the country causes fear that there may be some truth to the saying.

We see families leaving behind them empty houses where once a father waited, with a smile and two sharp knives, to carve the Christmas turkey. Now this father stands outside his pickup truck and trailer loaded with everything the family has. He closes his eyes and blinks himself back to the present--low crop prices, high farming costs, and bank foreclosures. It all seems like a scene directly from John Steinbeck's 1939 novel *THE GRAPES OF WRATH* with a modern-day setting and new characters.

To many young people today, the thought of graduation and facing the future seems more depressing than exciting.

If this is our modern-day version of the Depression, what must the future have looked like to the youth of the Thirties? To answer that question, it seemed logical to talk with someone who had been a youngster during the Depression.

Jewel and Leroy Bunch are a retired couple from Rocky. Jewel is a former elementary school teacher, and Leroy is a retired banker, having spent his entire career at the State Bank of Rocky. Now in their seventies, the Bunches were in their late teens during the Depression; therefore, they are excellent resources of the past.

"I was 17 and Leroy was 19 in 1931," said Mrs. Bunch. Mr. Bunch chuckles, "I was in college up at O.U. trying to live as cheaply as I could. My dad would sell a cow--the kind you would get \$200 for today--for \$30 to provide my college money. The money was always accompanied by a request for me to live cheaper."

"At the same time, my family was searching for work, and we weren't certain we would stay in Oklahoma.

My father heard there might be work in Arizona. We all wondered how we would move our things out there if Dad got the job. My sister told my mother not to worry, that her bed had

rollers on it, and we could put our things on her bed and attach it to the back of our car. It certainly would have changed the image of the Okie, wouldn't it?" laughed Mrs. Bunch.



Illustration by Tim Reynolds

I reminded them that there's a serious side to this reminiscing and asked, "How did this catastrophe begin?"

Mr. Bunch answered first. "This whole area used to be prairie grass. There wasn't any farming in the early days. When the settlers came in here, they began to plow up sections of the grass for farming. They didn't know how to protect their land yet, and this tilled-up land would be pounded up by rain, which caused these flat lands to become hard and crusted."

Continuing the agricultural causes of the Depression, Mr. Bunch commented, "There were a lot of lay crops in those days (fields that were left idle with no crops on them for one year to rest the soil); and when the wind blew across those fields it created dust and a lot of it."

Mrs. Bunch then offered insight into another cause of the Depression: "The crash of the stock market, the country's financial center, and the beginning of the daily storms of dust in Oklahoma seemed almost to occur simultaneously. The stock market seemed far away to us," Mrs. Bunch continued. "Our livelihoods and those of the people we knew then depended on the crops. We had little knowledge of a place where people invested money."

When asked to describe a dirt storm, Mr. Bunch replied, "Every day at noon, they would have to dismiss class. The dust was so bad the professors couldn't talk, and we couldn't breathe. You could see it coming out in the distance. The sky would become red with dirt, and

people would head for home or indoors somewhere. They would put handkerchiefs on their faces to cover their noses and mouths till they could get there and everybody hurried. It would blow till vision was nearly nil. Once people were inside, they would put wet blankets up over the windows to try to keep out the dirt, but to little avail. A man who farmed during those days farmed with a team and hand plow. He couldn't just go jump on a tractor and plow a few strips on the field to stop the dust. He and his animals would have strangled to death before he could have finished."

Many people who didn't make a living by farming did so by picking the crops; therefore, when the crops were destroyed, non-farmers were also affected. Those who had money saved in the banks for security, as a general rule, lost it. "When the market crashed," said Mr. Bunch, "everyone assumed that the banks would be next, and that was right. Fred, my brother, was in charge of the bank here in Rocky at the time. The government declared what they called a banking holiday, forcing all the banks to close their doors, in an effort to stop runs on the banks. We were one of only three banks in the state that was 100 percent liquid and the first to open our door again." However, statewide many banks never opened again, and many people were left out in the street, penniless.

Some had no family, or they just wanted to go where there was still a hint of work to be had. They were the ones tagged "Okies," people who were infamous for their system of moving. An Okie tied a mattress to

the top of his car, put a washtub on the back bumper, and put everything else he owned, including his chickens, in his home on wheels. The most popular destination was California. Back then, California wasn't associated with glitter, glamour, and Hollywood premiers—but with cultivating orange and grapefruit orchards, grape vineyards, and avocado fields, a job for which many felt well trained. Still others went to the coastal area seeking work in factories or in the shipping industry.

Even though masses left, many people remained. They struggled through, using every "alphabet soup" program available, such as WPA and CCC, that President Roosevelt and his "brain trust" could throw out to their desperate hands. Gradually, things did improve; and with the beginning of World War II, the people saw a twelve-year nightmare finally come to an end. The employed at last began to outnumber the unemployed.

As for our problems today, despite the "safety nets," as Mr. Bunch calls legislation passed in the thirties that keep us from total economic disaster today, we still have families facing financial ruin. "It's always a depression if you can't get a job," Mrs. Bunch indicated.

"Is there hope for a brighter future?" I asked them.

"These things come in cycles," Mr. Bunch replied. "Better times will be here again. It may take a while, but the cycle **will** turn upward." ■

*RUTH TITTLE is a Junior English major at SOSU. A resident of Rocky, she has previously published essays in CHANNEL ONE.*

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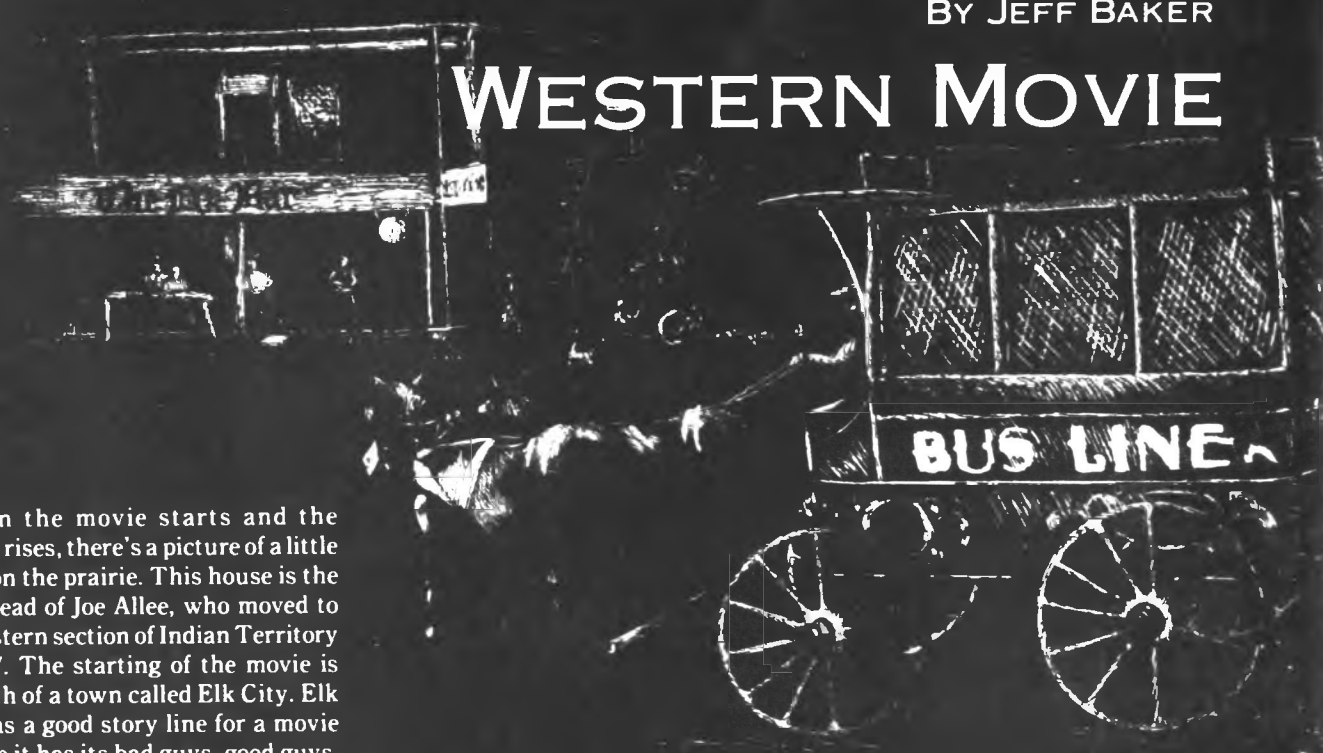
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BY JEFF BAKER

# WESTERN MOVIE



When the movie starts and the curtain rises, there's a picture of a little house on the prairie. This house is the homestead of Joe Allee, who moved to the western section of Indian Territory in 1897. The starting of the movie is the birth of a town called Elk City. Elk City has a good story line for a movie because it has its bad guys, good guys, and even a railroad. The history of Elk City began when Joe Allee sold the entire townsite for \$2,500. Little did Allee realize that in 1900, M. G. Robinson would make a deal with Beeks Erick, a Weatherford banker, to buy the Elk City townsite from the Choctaw Townsite Company, knowing that the Choctaw and Gulf Railroad was coming soon; but Allee didn't know this when he sold the land. Then on March 18, 1901, Elk City officially became a town. And on March 20, 1901, "the most important day in the history of Elk City," was the day the lots were sold. Hundreds of prospective buyers had built a "tent city," and the growth of Elk City was just beginning.

If a town is going to get started in the right direction, it must have a good city government. S. A. Elliott, according to a 1901 issue of the ELK CITY DEMOCRAT, was elected as the first mayor on August 4, 1901. However, there are other reports to indicate that R. T. Keen was the first official mayor. In 1902, a story in the DEMOCRAT reported the election of three city officials: W. C. Ernest, town clerk and treasurer; D. T. Johnson, police judge; and J. C. Colwell, city marshal. After a few years had passed, Elk City had set up permanent city positions through a City of First Class resolution signed by R. T. Keen as mayor. The resolution set up a permanent election and an active government in Elk City.

Joe Allee was Elk City's first active

developer. He dug the first water well on the location site where the Elk Cleaners now stands at Third and Madison. Early town settlers depended on his well for their survival. Since the time of the first water well, Elk City grew with a population of 1,000 and some 60 businesses. The development of any city depends on banks to finance businesses, and the first bank was started in Elk City by E. G. Thurmond in 1901, and it's still there today. After the banks came other businesses such as the Story Hotel. In the early days, it was a good resting place for tired, weary travelers. ◊

The economic development of Elk City flourished because of two oil booms. The first one occurred in the late forties and early fifties. It helped many of the downtown businesses because the Shell Company built a plant south of the city and employed thousands of people, many of whom became wealthy overnight. After the first boom was over, many people thought that was the end; but it hit again in the late 70's and early 80's. The new boom further developed Elk City into what it is today.

One of the most important aspects of a city is how well the people support it. Elk citizens have always felt a strong sense of pride toward one another and toward their country. For instance, on December 4, 1941, Tex Davis was Elk City's first casualty of World War II,

and Elk City answered to the war call by sending its boys; then the community took action by doing what it could to help the war and the boys overseas. The people are also often involved in helping others. When in 1984 Kimberly Fuller needed a heart and lung transplant, many residents donated money to help with the cost of the operation. Kimberly soon had enough money for the operation; and while she was waiting for a donor, the people of Elk City stood behind her and her family. Considering such a spirit of cooperation, it's no wonder that Elk City is so successful.

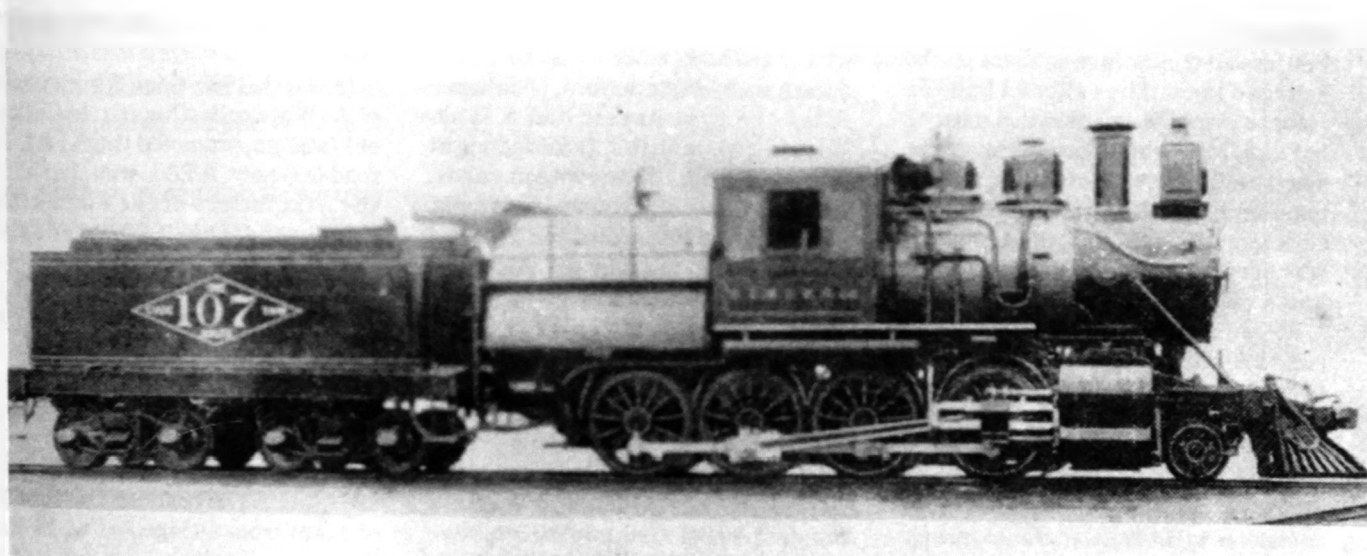
Elk City has gone a long way since the early days when the townsite was Joe Allee's homestead. With the development and the support of the people, Elk City has become one of the major cities of Western Oklahoma. And the people will never let anyone forget what it took to get there. Elk City has three museums and several historic locations to remind everyone of the town's heritage. The citizens want everyone who passes Elk City to see more than just a few buildings. They want everyone to see the true Elk City like a Western movie, but never ending even after the sun sets. ■

*JEFF BAKER, a sophomore Political Science major and Journalism minor at SOSU from Elk City, is Sports Editor for THE SOUTHWESTERN.*



# West With The Rock Island

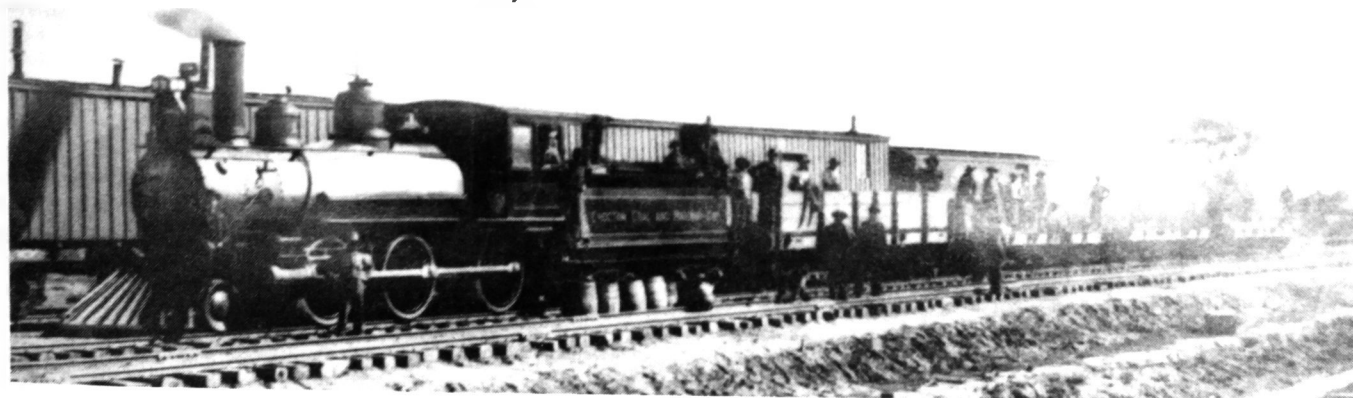
By Richard Garrity



After years of restraint, railroads were entering Oklahoma in the late 1880's. The Santa Fe had arrived. By 1889, the Chicago, Kansas, and Nebraska Railroad began construction from Caldwell, Kansas, south through Oklahoma. Much of it was on the old Chisholm Trail. In April, the first train

arrived at Hennessey, Oklahoma. The following year it entered El Reno and then continued to Minco. Because of many financial problems, the fledgling line was sold to the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific in 1891. El Reno, located on that north-south line, desired to connect with the Santa Fe in Oklahoma City.

The Choctaw Coal and Railway, which was incorporated in Minnesota in 1887, filed an Oklahoma charter in 1891. It was to operate in the Wister-McAlester coal area. Another section of the railroad was surveyed from El Reno to Oklahoma City. It was to connect with the parent line at Mc-



Choctaw and Coal Railroad at El Reno about 1890 Canadian County Historical Society

Alester. The El Reno portion planned to be in Oklahoma City in April, 1889. This would give it access to the north-south Santa Fe Railroad.

Promoters of the proposed trackage complied with all regulations in regard to crossing government lands. The right-of-way had been surveyed, staked, and approved for an entry into Oklahoma City. It didn't work that way.

April 22, 1889, thousands of homemakers rushed into Oklahoma Station (Oklahoma City) to establish their claims. During the bedlam, the railroad stakes were trampled or removed. Settlers erected homes or shops on the railroad land. The railroad had the right to evict the misplaced claimants but didn't. Instead, it compromised for one hundred feet, not the surveyed two-hundred-foot easement. Later, the Choctaw Coal and Railway Company was purchased by the Choctaw, Oklahoma, and Gulf Railroad.

Following the Cheyenne-Arapaho run on April 19, 1892, and the lottery of the Comanche, Kiowa, and Apache land from June 9 until August 6, 1901, settlers had entered Western Oklahoma to build homes and towns. Railroads would provide transportation and commerce to the isolated communities. Some railroads were on the fringe of the area.

Early in 1892, railroad construction crews were slicing through the Cheyenne-Arapaho Reservation from El Reno toward Geary, Oklahoma, a station on the Choctaw, Oklahoma, and Gulf Railroad. Geary was a corruption of the name of Edmund Guerrier, a well-known scout of the plains.

The Watonga and Northwestern Railroad was incorporated in May, 1900 to provide passenger and freight service to the gypsum deposits north of Watonga and Geary. Acquired by the Rock Island in 1902, it was abandoned in May, 1920.

Bridgeport was nine difficult miles from Geary. The railroad construction crew graded and moved through the hills and canyons in the right-of-way before it reached the South Canadian river. This major river which had a mile-wide flood plain was spanned with a steel truss bridge. Other traffic was forced to ford the river until a suspension bridge was built in 1921.

Helen Ruth, sister of Oklahoma historical writer Kent Ruth of Geary, Oklahoma, remembers when the rail-

road structure was destroyed in a flood.

In 1914, the South Canadian was flooding and the bridge was threatened. Six railroad men were on the truss. They had different opinions on the security of the span. When the water washed out the approaches, some of the men walked the ties to the bank. Four men were washed into the river and were drowned. Two weren't recovered. The bridge was rebuilt and is still in service in 1987.

Driving west, by August, 1898, the Choctaw, Oklahoma, and Gulf arrived at a cornfield, which was to be the future site of Weatherford, Oklahoma. After the first day, it had a bank. Within two months, it added eight lumber yards, fifteen wagon yards, fourteen saloons, and five dance halls. For a time, it was called the "wildest and wooliest" town in the area. The town was named after William Weatherford, a homesteader in 1892.

Early in 1901, the Choctaw, Oklahoma, and Gulf was in the vicinity of the present town of Clinton, Oklahoma. By 1903, the then southbound Blackwell, Enid, and Southwestern crossed the CO&G tracks. A townsite Washita Junction was platted, and the lots were sold June 3-5, 1903. The Post Office Department changed the name to Clinton. It became an important rail hub. In 1907, the Blackwell, Enid, and Southwestern Railroad was transferred to the Frisco.

Continuing west, the Choctaw arrived at Busch. It was named after a beer company. After statehood and prohibition, it was changed to Elk City. At Elk City, further extension of the Choctaw to the Oklahoma-Texas line was almost ready for operation when the Rock Island purchased the Choctaw Railroad.

When the Rock Island arrived at Erick in the fall of 1901, Beeks Erick, president of the Choctaw Townsite and Improvement Company was engaged in promoting a railside town. The town was called Erick.

Early in 1902, the Rock Island reached the Oklahoma-Texas state line. The town of Texola came into being when the railroad arrived and continued to Amarillo, Texas.

Rock Island had 760 miles of trackage from Amarillo to Memphis, Tennessee. Oklahoma had 364 miles of the only east-west line in the state. The route was known as the Sunbelt.

In 1980, Rock Island went bankrupt and was ordered to sell for whatever value could be salvaged on about one thousand miles of trackage in Oklahoma. This action left many towns without rail transportation. Area interest and the state attempted to put the idle railroad into operation.

The Farmrail Line, locally owned, slowly updated the rails from Hydro to Erick. A section from Watonga to El Reno was idle three or four years before the North Central Railroad (NCOK) began service between the towns. After 1½ years, it was discontinued in 1984.

In March, 1985, Gene Wheeler, owner of the Wheeler Brothers Grain Company of Watonga, promoted the AT&L Railroad to Geary. AT&L was coined from the first letters of the names of his three grandsons--Austin, Todd, and Ladd Lafferty. When it was extended to El Reno, he had an outlet on the north-south Oklahoma, Kansas, and Texas (OKT).

In the spring of 1987, Bob Hussey, a railroad contractor from Oklahoma City, rebuilt and ballasted the roadbed from Geary to Bridgeport. By June, 1987, the AT&L carried the first load of grain from Bridgeport to El Reno. With the exception of a washed-out section between Bridgeport and Hydro, rail service has been restored to Erick.

Presently, CORA, a rail fan group from Oklahoma City, is promoting rail excursions on sections of the AT&L Railroad. They will use two vintage cars, one from the Union Pacific; the other, from Santa Fe. The cycle has been completed. ■

*CREDITS: Kent Ruth and Helen Ruth, Canadian County Historical Museum; Steve Snola of AT&L; Warren Cusick, station agent at El Reno; and Western History Collections.*

*REFERENCES: Kent Ruth's OKLAHOMA TRAVEL HANDBOOK; Department of Highways, RAILROADS OF OKLAHOMA; Department of Transportation, OKLAHOMA STATE RAIL PLAN; George Shirk's OKLAHOMA PLACE NAMES; Muriel H. Wright's THE STORY OF OKLAHOMA; Arrell M. Gibson's HISTORY OF OKLAHOMA; William Edward Hayes' IRON ROAD TO EMPIRE (Rock Island); BLAINE COUNTY HISTORY.*

*RICHARD GARRITY of Oklahoma City is a valued WESTVIEW writer, photographer, and historian.*

signs of progress and regression

## Giant Field

By Margie Snowden North

Unorthodox ideas  
and playing hunches  
are part of the oilman's game.

Shell Oil, New York, 1947. . .  
Orders to forsake that block of leases  
back there in Western Oklahoma--  
Beckham County, east--  
(Where is that, anyway?)  
those leaves that have been  
shocked and vibrated and measured and recorded,  
prodded and probed and burrowed to 13,000 feet,  
Dry hole  
Judged a failure by appropriate committees,  
approved for abandonment.

But Shell's new president\* was an oilman,  
a trailblazer (as oilmen are likely to be)  
and the explorer in him overruled  
logic and raw facts.

His ultimatum: Try 'er again, boys  
Re-examine the prospect.

Unorthodox, yes.  
Sensible to forget a failure  
But they gave her one more try.

Jackpot  
Ace up a sleeve  
A giant field\*\*, and more  
120 million barrels  
of gleaming black gold  
because an oilman--  
the most prolific gambler of them all--  
played a hunch and won.

*\*Max Burns was quoted later as saying, "I don't know why, but I couldn't begin my job as president by condemning an area as having no oil." It was on his first day as Shell's president that he refused to abandon the sites near Elk City.*

*\*\*Giant field: term for an oil field containing more than a million barrels.*

### *Fading Star — cont'd from page 25.*

as she reached for the doorknob, however, James' hand shot out and he pulled her into the room by her hair. Mira touched her head now in remembrance. Yes, it was still quite sore. This time, she was sure that he meant to kill her, so she had fought him back. Her punches had been few; but because of his inebriated condition, she managed to throw him on the ground. She then ran out of the house and came to the only secure place she had known for a long time.

Now as she sat there, alone and afraid, she asked herself, "Why?" Why did her life have to be the way it was? Other girls led normal lives, but her life revolved around her stepfather and the kind of mood he was in. If he was in his usual drunk mood, she went around the house cowering and trying to hide, but it was useless. He usually found fault with everything she did, and he beat her for it. Her mother had stopped trying to protect her since the time James had broken her arm for doing so. She remembered the wild, crazy look he got when he beat her like a punching

bag. His eyes, full of hate and repulsion, seemed to probe into her very being while his clenched fists hit her again and again. Why did he hate her so much? Mira tried to please him, but he didn't care. Mira thought about the future. What did it have in store for her? Would she grow up to be like her mother? No! She wanted to be a nurse. But what chances did she have of even surviving?

The train whistle interrupted her thoughts. With a swift trot, she headed for the door and listened. Yes, it was very near. She would need to hurry if she wanted to be on time. She buttoned her worn jacket and stepped outside. At first, the cold numbed her, but then she broke into a slow, shaky jog. While running, she thought about what she was going to do. It was the only way out. Her life in this world was meaningless. The hurt and pain would be gone forever. Yes, she would do it! As if to reassure herself, she ran faster. From far away, she resembled a tiny struggling figure. When she arrived at the railroad tracks, she sat down, gasping for breath. Her eyes searched for the train and didn't find it, but the whistle came closer and closer. Slowly,

she got up and smoothed her hair as best she could. The tears were threatening to overflow, and she tilted her head back, looking at the dark, stormy sky. "God," she asked the Almighty, "Why did you put me in this world to suffer like this? What is the purpose of living if my life is controlled by such a beast?" As Mira uttered these words, a tiny patch of blue appeared in the sky. As if awakening from a dream, the truth dawned on her. Her brothers and sisters had not foolishly thrown themselves in front of a train. No. They had patiently waited and then just simply walked away. Why should she kill herself? Maybe she could become a nurse after all. Of course, it would take plenty of work, but she could do it. As she was thinking, she walked away. The train sped by, urging her to come back, but Mira walked on. Up in the sky, sunlight streamed through the patch of blue. Life wouldn't be easy for her, but after the storm, the most beautiful calm would envelop her. ■

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# FUTURE ISSUES

## Winter 1987

### Western Oklahoma Success Stories

SPRING, 1988 (Western Oklahoma's Pacesetters; deadline: 12-15-87)

FALL, 1989 (Western Oklahoma Cemeteries; deadline: 7-1-89)

SUMMER, 1988 (Western Oklahoma "Stars"; deadline: 2-15-88)

WINTER, 1989 (Western Oklahoma Artisans; deadline: 9-15-89)

FALL, 1988 (Western Oklahoma Politicians; deadline: 7-1-88)

SPRING, 1990 (Western Oklahoma's Children; deadline: 12-15-89)

WINTER, 1988 (Western Oklahoma Landmarks; deadline: 9-15-88)

SUMMER, 1990 (Western Oklahoma's Diverse Voices; deadline: 2-15-90)

SPRING, 1989 (Western Oklahoma Festivals; deadline: 12-15-88)

We prefer 5 x 7 or 8 x 10 b & w glossies that we can keep, as well as clear, original manuscripts (no copies, please).

SUMMER, 1989 (Western Oklahoma Celebrations; deadline: 2-15-89)

*Please notice changes in submissions deadlines.*



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